

Harry Potter and the Spirit of Time

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1. Return to Grimmauld Place

The group of students walked in the door of Grimmauld Place and sat their trunks down on the floor. Harry breathed a sigh of relief, "It's good to be home."

Ginny smiled at him, "So, this is home, then."

Harry nodded, "Until we move into Potter Manor, it is."

Fred and George grinned mischievously, and Harry groaned as he realized what he had just said. Fred began, "What do you mean, 'we', Potter?"

George finished, "One would almost think that you were suggesting that Ginny move in with you."

Harry winked at Ginny, "I was."

Fred and George stopped in surprise. Ron burst out savagely, "Harry, my sister is not going to be living with you."

Harry snorted, "I think that is up to Ginny to decide, and I don't think that your parents will have any objection as long as I marry her."

Ron stopped flabbergasted, "Are you saying that you're going to marry her?"

Harry turned away from Ron and looked straight into Ginny's eyes, "Could there ever be any doubt that I would want to marry her?"

Ginny shook her head, the entire room forgotten, "There was never a doubt in my mind, Mr. Potter." The two of them moved together and their lips met, while they were standing in the foyer.

Ron, Hermione, and the twins simply stood and stared in amazement. Molly and Arthur smiled at the two, before Arthur coughed loudly to alert the two that they had an audience. Harry and Ginny broke apart and grinned sheepishly in embarrassment. Molly put her hands on her hips, “When exactly were you thinking of putting a ring on my daughter’s finger?”

“When I finish my N.E.W.T.’s?” asked Harry.

Molly pursed her lips in disapproval, “Ginny will still be at school. I think that is a little young to be getting married.”

Harry went a step further, “Not if we wait a year after the proposal to get married. We could wait until she finishes school.”

Arthur stepped in, “I can live with that.”

Harry grinned, “Good, because that was what I was planning on doing anyway.”

Ginny stomped her foot angrily, “There’s one problem with all of this, Mr. Potter.”

Harry turned to her, “What’s that?”

“You can’t exactly surprise me with the proposal if I know when you’re going to do it.” answered Ginny.

Harry grinned mischievously, “I may not be able to surprise you with when, but I know that you will be surprised with the how.”

Hermione looked at Harry, “Exactly how are you going to propose to her.”

Harry bowed, “As to that, my lips are sealed. There does not exist a person that could get the information out of me.”

Ginny advanced on him, “I bet that I could, Mr. Potter.”

Harry smirked, “I assure you, Miss Weasley, that you are the last person that I would ever tell. I intend to shock and amaze you.”

Ginny smiled, “You do that everyday.”

Ron, Fred, and George made fake gagging noises. Harry frowned at them, “Alright, enough mush. Let’s just get our stuff upstairs. I need to drop by the manor.” He turned to Ginny, “Do you want to come with me?”

Ginny nodded, “Of course. I love that house.”

Fred and George snickered, and George said, “The two of you just want to sneak off to snog.”

Harry shook his head, “As large as this house is, we don’t have to leave for that. I need to pick up my Pensieve, and I want to check on the Quidditch pitch. I need to run by Diagon Alley as well to pick up some Quidditch gear. I want to get a set of Quidditch balls. At some point this summer, we’re getting some people over to Potter Manor and having a game. Hopefully more than once.”

Ron looked at Harry in bewilderment, “What pitch are you talking about?”

Harry gasped, “I can’t believe that I didn’t tell you. The field behind Potter Manor is bewitched so that you can play Quidditch on it without being spotted by Muggles. If I put a blocking charm just like a real pitch, we’ll even be able to use real balls.”

Ron and the twins grinned, “Wicked.”

Molly seemed concerned, “Harry, are you sure that’s safe?”

"It's perfectly safe, Molly. Voldemort is hardly likely to attempt attacking me in broad daylight. Besides, since Potter Manor has been empty for so long, it's the last place that he will expect me to show up at. He's not going to be able to pick us out of Diagon Alley either, even if he is dumb enough to try. Voldemort is going to attempt to take me while I am asleep for the time being. He's not suicidal enough to face me head on, unless he uncovers some of Merlin and Morgana's lost spells." answered Harry.

Arthur leaned forward, "What if he does discover the spells that he needs to defeat you, Harry?"

Harry grinned, "Just because he learns the spells doesn't guarantee victory for him. It just gives him a chance. Besides, I would know if he learned them."

Hermione asked, "Why?"

Harry shrugged, "I can still sense his emotions even if I can't read his thoughts. The elation that he would feel from discovering something of that nature would be unmistakable." Harry turned and lugged his trunk upstairs, and the others reluctantly followed him.

A few minutes later, Ginny was standing in front of the fireplace waiting for Harry to come back downstairs. Harry walked into the room with a light cloak that covered his entire torso on. Ginny asked, "Why are you wearing that thing?" Molly looked on in curiosity.

Harry moved the fold of the cloak to the side to reveal that he was carrying the Sword of Gryffindor. He flashed a feral smile, "Just because I don't think that Voldemort is dumb enough to attack me directly, doesn't mean that I am not going to be prepared if he is that stupid. I don't intend to take any unnecessary chances."

Molly smiled in approval, "Don't be too long. I'm going to be starting dinner in about an hour."

Harry grinned, "It shouldn't take us much longer than that. We'll be back soon." He stepped into the fire and yelled, "Diagon Alley."

Ginny turned to her mother, "He didn't use Floo Powder, Mum."

Molly shrugged, "I don't know. I guess that he figured some way around it."

Ginny grinned at the thought of how powerful Harry was as she grabbed some Floo Powder and threw into the fire. She followed it in saying, "Diagon Alley." She stepped out into the Leaky Cauldron to find Harry waiting for her. The two of them walked through the pub, and out into the Alley. Ginny looked over at Harry as they moved through the throng of shoppers. "Harry, did you know that you didn't use Floo Powder to get here?"

Harry grinned as he looked around to make sure that no one was listening, "Sorry about that. I should have warned you. I didn't use the Floo Network. I Apparated. I just have to practice, so that I can make it look like I am using the Floo Network, because I don't want it to be common knowledge that I can Apparate."

Ginny pouted, "You could have told me."

"I meant to. I just forgot with everything else that we were talking about. Here's Quality Quidditch Supplies. Let's get the balls and then head for the manor." Harry said.

The two of them walked into the shop, and the clerk bustled over, recognizing Harry immediately. "Mr. Potter, what can I do for you today?"

Harry grinned, "I told you to call me Harry, and I need a full set of Quidditch balls with a case."

The clerk nodded, "Certainly, Harry. I will get it for you immediately." He walked into the back to get the case, while Harry pulled a money pouch from within his robes. The clerk sat the case on the counter and said, "That will be 20 Galleons."

Harry dropped the money on the counter with a flourish, and then grabbed the case and hoisted it onto his shoulders as he handed Ginny the money. Ginny took the pouch, and followed Harry out of the store. The two walked back through the Alley and into the Leaky Cauldron. Harry walked up to the fireplace, and looked around quickly. No one was paying very close attention to him, so he stepped into the fire and called out, "Potter Manor." He disappeared in a puff of smoke.

Ginny smiled to herself, "He sure knows how to make an exit." She pulled a pinch of Floo powder out, and tossed it into the fire, and followed Harry to Potter Manor. She stepped out to find him sitting on the couch. "You seem cozy enough."

Harry sighed, "I am, and if I didn't have so much work to do, I would definitely ask you to come be cozy with me, but alas, it is not to be." Harry jumped up and pulled Ginny into his arms. He kissed her gently, and then smiled, "Well, it's time to get to work."

Ginny asked, "What do we have to do?"

Harry grinned, "Well, I have to put a blocking charm on the pitch, but I can easily do that later. I want to strengthen the wards around the house as well, but that will have to wait as well. What I need to do is much more important." He held out his hand, "Hold on. I'm going to Apparate us somewhere."

Ginny asked, "Why can't we just Floo?"

Harry shook his head, "The Floo Network doesn't connect to Azkaban."

Ginny squawked, "Why are we going to Azkaban?"

Harry chuckled, "Don't worry. The prison is abandoned since the Dementors went over to Voldemort's side."

"Then, why are we going?"

Harry grinned, "I think that we should begin using the prison again for Death Eaters. I just have to arrange some new guards."

Ginny asked hesitantly, "What kind of guards?"

"You'll see. Now, take my hand so that we can go."

Ginny sighed and grasped Harry's hand. The two of them disappeared from the manor and reappeared on an island. A large forbidding fortress sat on the island. It was a dismal place. Ginny shuddered at the sight of it.

Harry smiled down at her, "We won't be here long. You'll have to be quiet, so that I can work the magic for this."

Ginny persisted by asking again, "What are you going to do?"

Harry waved a hand at her, "Just wait and see the finished product. By the way this is a hush-hush matter for the time being. I'm going to tell the Order and the Ministry once I am sure that it is going to work."

Ginny stepped back and stayed silent so that she could see whatever feat that Harry was going to accomplish. Harry raised his arms and began to chant in some long dead language. Ginny watched while Harry continued to chant in a rising and falling tone of voice. She gasped in amazement a moment later as a gigantic mound of earth erupted up from the ground and then began to split up into man-shaped figures that were easily twelve feet tall. Once there were at least two-hundred of them, Harry stopped chanting. "What are they?"

Harry slumped down to the ground. Ginny ran over to him. He waved her off, "I'm fine. Just give me a minute to recover."

"Are you sure you're okay, Harry?" asked Ginny in concern.

Harry nodded, "Yes, I'm fine. That spell just took a lot out of me."

"What did you do?"

“Those are Golems, Ginny. I just created two-hundred and fifty of them to be the new guards of Azkaban.” answered Harry.

Ginny stared at Harry in shock, “Are you serious? Do they work?”

Harry nodded, “They work just fine. All I have to is activate him. Once I key them to certain personnel at the Ministry and in the Order, I will do so. Then, we can bring the Death Eaters here.”

“When are you going to tell the others?”

Harry shrugged, “We don’t have to be in any big rush. The next Order meeting, I guess. Let’s go back and eat some of your mother’s cooking.”

Ginny snorted, “Boys. Trust you to always be thinking with your stomach. You’re as bad as Ron.”

Harry replied in indignation, “I am not. Ron would chew somebody’s arm off to get to the food. I’m hardly that bad. I just used up a lot of power. I need something to replenish my energy levels.”

Ginny smirked, “I know. I was just trying to see if I could get a reaction out of you.”

Harry nodded, “If that’s the way that you want to play the game, Miss Weasley, you do realize that I can leave you out here.”

Ginny smiled coyly, “I don’t think you would do that, Mr. Potter.”

“Why is that?” asked Harry.

She smiled, “Because you love me.”

Harry eyed her warily, “I don’t know. I’m not for sure. You’ll have to remind me of whether or not I do.”

Ginny continued to smile, “I guess my brothers were right. You did just bring me along, so that we could sneak off to snog.”

Harry laughed, “If that was truly what I had in mind, I think that I would have found more romantic surroundings.”

Ginny laughed with him, “I guess you would have. However, here is your reminder.” She leaned down to him and kissed him lingeringly on the lips.

They broke apart after a few moments and Harry nodded, “Yeah, you’re right. I definitely love you.”

She smiled, “I knew all along.”

“Let’s go home.” Harry stood up and held out his hand to Ginny. She took it and they Apparated to Grimmauld Place. They popped into Harry’s room, and scared the wits out of Ron.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing, Harry? You almost gave me a heart attack.” Ron yelled.

Hermione came running in when she heard Ron yell. “What’s going on?” she asked. Then, she noticed that Harry and Ginny were doubled over with laughter.

Ron pointed at the two of them in disgust, “They just popped in on me, and scared me half to death.”

Hermione attempted to hide a smile behind her hand, but Ron saw her. “You think this is funny too, don’t you?”

Hermione giggled slightly, “Well, it is kind of amusing.”

Ron shook his head, “Whatever, I’m going down to dinner.”

Harry and Ginny finally stood up straight, and quit laughing at Ron. Ginny wiped the tears of mirth that had been forming in her eyes away. She said, “That was great.”

Hermione tried to look disapproving, but she couldn’t keep the smirk off her face, “That wasn’t very nice. You scared him pretty badly.”

Harry shrugged, "It isn't like we did it on purpose. I assumed that everyone would already be eating dinner by now. So, I decided that we would Apparate up here where no one would be likely to hex us just because we appeared from nowhere."

Ginny took Harry's hand, "Come on. Let's go eat. You can make up with Ron later."

Hermione chuckled, "Don't worry about him. He won't remember what he's upset about by the time that he finishes dinner."

The three teenagers walked downstairs to the kitchen for dinner. The rest of the evening passed by with some occasional banter, and several games of Wizard's Chess and Exploding Snap. Soon enough it was time for bed and the two boys kissed their respective girlfriends goodnight.

Later that night, Harry awoke to noises coming from downstairs. He listened for a moment, and then determined that he could definitely hear Dumbledore's voice. He pulled on his robe, and kicked Ron's bed, "Ron, wake up."

Ron rolled over and said sleepily, "Five more minutes, Mum."

Harry replied exasperatedly, "I am not your mum, and we don't have five bloody minutes. Something's wrong. Dumbledore is here and it's the middle of the night. Go and wake the girls."

Ron looked at Harry drowsily as he started to walk out the door and asked, "Where are you going?"

"Downstairs to find out what is going on."

"What if they don't want you to find out what is going on?" asked Ron.

Harry shrugged, "What are they going to do about it? Send me to my room? In case you have forgotten, we're in my house. I can throw everybody out if I decided that it was necessary."

Ron gave a short laugh, "Oh, yeah, I forgot."

Harry walked downstairs as Ron dragged himself out of bed. Harry walked into the kitchen to find Arthur and Molly sitting at the table. Molly had obviously been crying, and Arthur was holding her in his arms. Harry stopped in the doorway, "What happened? It isn't one of the boys is it?"

Arthur shook his head, "No, Harry, all of our children are fine. It's the Burrow."

Harry turned to Dumbledore, "What happened at the Burrow?"

Dumbledore sighed, "I suppose that we need to wake the others. They will want to hear this as well."

Harry waved his hand, "They'll be down in a minute. I woke Ron up and told him to wake the girls." As soon as Harry said these words the other three teenagers walked into the kitchen. Harry sighed, "I think that we had better sit down for this."

Ginny looked at her mother, "Mum, what's wrong?"

Dumbledore spoke up, "I will explain, Miss Weasley."

Ginny nodded, "Okay, Professor."

Dumbledore began as the others sat down around the table, "Tonight, Voldemort sent a raiding party of Death Eaters and Dementors into Ottery- St. Catchpole. They were apparently searching for the Burrow. It is my presumption that they assumed that you would be there, Harry."

Harry nodded to signal that he understood the implication. Dumbledore continued, "The Burrow was destroyed. There is nothing left."

Ginny grasped Harry's hand under the table, and he gave it a gentle squeeze to signify that he understood. It was up to him to ask the question that had occurred to everyone. "What about the Muggles? How many of them were killed?"

Dumbledore's eyes narrowed in anger as he thought about the attack, "There were ten Muggles killed tonight, Harry. Many more were injured, and the Ministry has Obliviators sorting out the mess right now."

Harry slammed his free hand down onto the table in a fist. "It's time that I had a little conversation with Tom, I believe. Let me concentrate for just a moment."

Harry closed his eyes and allowed his consciousness to flow out towards Voldemort, "Tom!"

"What, Potter?" Voldemort's voice dripped with malice.

"Since you are obviously displeased, I take it that you know your little attack failed. However, you did manage to destroy my friend's home, and I don't take kindly to that. Not to mention the ten Muggles that died tonight. I will be taking my pound of flesh in payment from your Death Eaters. So, why don't you save me some time, and tell me which ones you sent. That way I can kill the right ones. If not, I will simply have to kill the first Death Eaters that I come across."

"My legions will destroy you, Potter. I will still be triumphant."

Harry snorted loudly in Voldemort's mind, "You really don't get it, do you. Your pathetic Death Eaters couldn't summon enough power between all of them to kill me while I was sleeping. The only wizard with the power to harm me is you. The only way you have a prayer of defeating me is to expose yourself to death. I will win the war between us. I am your better. You will die, Tom."

"Get out of my mind, Potter." screamed Voldemort.

"You have your warning, Tom. Heed it. Do not attempt to anger me unduly." Harry's eyes fluttered open. "Well, I'd say that he's just a little upset to say the least."

Ron asked savagely, "He just killed a lot of people. Why is he mad?"

Harry sighed, "Right now, the only person that Tom wants to kill is me. Anyone else is just a spare. Just like Cedric. Damn, I wish that I had been there."

Ron's eyes brightened, "Hey, why don't you go there? You could pull that time travel trick like you did with me."

Harry shook his head, "I wish that I could, Ron, but it isn't possible."

Ron looked bewildered, "You did it before, why can't you do it now?"

"I can go back in time, Ron, but I can't alter the fabric of time. The effects can be bad if you do. I went back and saved your life, because I knew that I could do it without altering anyone else's actions. There are far too many people involved at the point where I would have to begin meddling to insure that I didn't break the fabric of time."

"I don't get it." said Ron.

"Okay, let me see if I can explain this satisfactorily. It's obvious that I didn't go back. Otherwise the timeframe that we are hearing would have already shown the difference. If I were to go back and stop the attack, then that means that I would either have to go disguised which would damage time, or allow myself to be recognized, and that would damage time."

Hermione jumped in with her question, "How?"

"Let's take scenario one. Let's say that I go back and stop the attack as a mysterious stranger. No one knows who saved the village. That means that no one would die, and that the Burrow would not be destroyed. However, no one would know that I was the one that saved everyone, so no one would assume that I had to go back in time. Dumbledore would not have come here to wake us in the middle of the night and we would end up with a paradox. I would have went back in time, but not went back in time. The fabric of time would be damaged. In the second scenario, everyone would know that it was me, and several people would know that it was me from the future. This would alter the reactions of everyone involved and create some serious waves through the fabric of time. Also, not good. So, you see, its basically impossible for me to go back and fix this without repercussions that would probably be worse than what actually happened. The only reason that I could think of to mess with something of this magnitude is if my past self was somehow killed, while I was in the past. The fallout from that would be disastrous."

Hermione, ever the student, asked, “What do you mean by that?”

Harry sighed, “Well, if my past self were to be killed by Voldemort, then my present self would merely cease to be. There would be some serious ripples in the flow of time, but it wouldn’t create a paradox. However, if my present self was in the past when it happened, then a paradox would be created, because the effect of my past self’s death would not affect my existence, because I was outside the natural flow of time when it occurred. Since I would be both alive and dead at the same time, it would create a paradox when I returned to the present.”

Ginny asked, “What would happen when you came back to the present?”

Harry winced, “Well, I’m only guessing, but most likely a lot of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tidal waves. Not to mention the fact that considering my power, the resulting magical implosion would probably rob every witch and wizard on the planet of their magic. That’s the worst case scenario.”

Everyone simply sat around the table in silence as they absorbed the impact of Harry’s words.

2. Hunting

The next evening after dinner, Harry disappeared, and it caused Ginny to worry. She went upstairs to look for him, and she found him dressed completely in black, climbing out the window. "Harry James Potter, just where do you think that you're going?"

Harry turned back around, "Where do you think? I'm going after some Death Eaters."

Ginny put her hands on her hips, "Not alone, you're not."

Harry sighed, "Ginny, I'll be fine."

"I know that, because I'm coming with you." said Ginny vehemently.

Harry looked into her eyes, and realized that there was no talking her out of coming with him. "Alright, but you'll need to be dressed more appropriately." Harry waved a hand at her, and her clothes were transformed into black tight fitting clothing very similar to what Harry was wearing. He smiled appreciatively, "You look good that way."

Ginny grinned impishly, "You don't look so bad yourself, Mr. Potter."

Harry chuckled, "You'll need a weapon, too. Do you think that you would be comfortable with a sword?"

Ginny nodded, "I think that I am quite proficient with a blade. I had an excellent teacher."

Harry snorted, "Suck up." Harry waved his hand and a blade, complete with scabbard appeared. "That should do. Strap it around your waist and we'll get going."

As Ginny was strapping the sword around her waist, Ron walked into the room. He stopped in surprise to see Harry armed with a sword, and his baby sister arming herself. "What are the two of you doing?"

Harry flashed a feral grin, "We're going Death Eater hunting."

"Not without me, you're not." said Ron in a similar vein to the one Ginny had used just a few moments before.

Harry shook his head, "Sorry, Ron, you can't go."

"Why not? You're not starting this stuff about keeping us out of danger. I think that we have proven ourselves enough. You're even going to take Ginny." said Ron in a resentful and hurt voice.

Harry shook his head, "That has nothing to do with it. You won't be able to keep up, and we can't afford to have you slowing us down."

Ron responded indignantly, "I'm not slow."

Ginny jumped in, "You are if you're on the ground, and we're in the air."

Ron stopped, "Oh."

Harry spoke, "We're going to be flying over the forest around the Burrow. If I know anything, there will be a group of Death Eaters posted there to watch for me to come by. We're going to take them." Harry turned to Ginny, "Do you have your wand?"

She nodded, "Of course. My dueling instructor told me to always have my wand ready."

"As I said before, suck up. Let's go." Harry turned back to Ron to see concern etched all over his face. Harry smiled, "Don't worry. I'll bring your sister back safe and sound." Harry transformed and Ginny quickly followed suit. The two birds flew out the window and into the warm summer night air.

Ron stared after them long after they had disappeared in the distance. Hermione walked in a few minutes later to find Ron staring out the window. "What are you doing? What is so interesting outside?"

Ron sighed, "Harry and Ginny just took off to go hunting for Death Eaters around the Burrow."

Hermione gasped in surprise, “Are you serious?”

Ron nodded, “Of course I’m serious. They just left.”

“What did they do, fly?” asked Hermione.

Ron nodded, again, “Yes, they both have flying Animagus forms.”

Hermione sighed, “I hope that they’re going to be alright.”

“They will. Harry would never let anything happen to Ginny.” Ron said with conviction.

“Then, why did he take her into danger?” asked Hermione.

Ron gave a half smile, “I know Ginny. Harry probably didn’t have much of a choice. If he had told her to stay here, she would have followed him anyway. At least if he knows where she’s at, he can protect her.”

Hermione wrapped an arm around Ron’s shoulder and leaned her head on his shoulder, “If it makes you feel better, we can stand here and wait for them to come back.”

“I intended to. Thanks for waiting with me.”

Hermione smiled, and the two of them continued to stare out the window in silence.

Meanwhile, Harry and Ginny were making exceptionally good time heading for the Burrow since Harry was magically augmenting their speed. The two made large circular sweeps over the forest once they arrived. Harry spotted the campfire, first. Then, he flew over to Ginny, and motioned with his head for her to follow him. They soared down into the trees, and landed. The two of them transformed back into human form. Harry put a finger in front of his lips to indicate to Ginny that she should be silent. He whispered quickly, “I’m going to attack in my panther form. There appeared to be about six of them. It shouldn’t be too difficult to take them. Once I attack, you need to start throwing Stunning Spells at them as quickly as you can.”

Ginny nodded to show that she understood. She pulled out her wand, and gripped it tightly. Harry transformed into a panther and stalked purposefully off towards the encampment. Ginny followed somewhat more slowly to allow Harry time to position himself. Once he was close enough, Harry leaped forward into the midst of the Death Eaters, and they jumped up in surprise. As soon as he did, Ginny began firing off Stunning Spells. Two of the Death Eaters attempted to use Avada Kedavra Spells on Harry. He dodged out of the way, and the spells hit two different Death Eaters. Ginny caught three of them with Stunners, and Harry transformed back into his human form. The sixth Death Eater took one look at him and screamed, “Potter.” Then, he Disapparated away.

Harry looked around at the strewn bodies. Ginny walked into the clearing. Harry grinned at her, “Nice spell work, my dear.”

She smiled, “I try. One of them got away, though.”

Harry nodded, “I know. I let him get away on purpose.”

“What does that mean?” asked Ginny.

“It means that I wanted to let one of them to go back and report to Tom. So, I blocked the Stunning Spell that you sent at him.” answered Harry.

Ginny frowned, “You could have told me. I would have avoided throwing a curse at one of them.”

Harry smirked, “Ah, but then I wouldn’t have gotten an accurate picture of your skills. This was a test as much as anything else.”

“A test?” echoed Ginny.

Harry nodded, “Of course. I am still your dueling instructor. Now, we need to contact the Ministry, and let them know they can come collect these Death Eaters.” At this moment, Dumbledore and Dawlish appeared with a collection of Aurors in tow. Harry smiled, “I expected all of you to be keeping a watch on me.”

Dawlish shook his head, “We weren’t. The Improper Use of Magic Office reported that young Miss Weasley was performing magic outside of school in contradiction to the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery. We assumed that meant she was with you.”

Harry looked at Ginny in exasperation, “Ginny, you weren’t masking your magic.”

Ginny grinned sheepishly, “I got caught up in the moment, and forgot.”

“I think that you need to be punished for this.” said Harry.

“What did you have in mind?” asked Ginny suggestively.

Harry grinned broadly, “I think that you should have to make me pancakes for breakfast in the morning.”

Ginny nodded, “Sounds like a plan to me.”

Dawlish interrupted them, “While your flirtation is extremely amusing, can we get back to more serious matters?”

Harry flushed slightly, while Ginny hid her face. Harry looked at Dawlish, “What did you want to know?”

Dawlish looked at Harry in disbelief, “First of all, what happened here?”

“Well, Ginny and I decided that we needed to hunt some Death Eaters. I expected there to be some watching the wreckage of the Burrow. So, we came here. Ginny hid in the woods, while I jumped into the campsite in my Animagus form. They drew their wands, and Ginny stunned three of them. Two of the ones that she stunned managed to throw Killing Curses at me. I dodged them, and they hit other Death Eaters. The sixth one got away.” explained Harry.

Dumbledore smiled, “I believe that explains everything, Dawlish. Now, I must insist that you allow me to take Ginny and Harry back home. We need to have an Order meeting this evening as well. Alert Kingsley. I will inform the others.”

Dawlish nodded, and he and the other Aurors Disapparated away with the Death Eaters in tow with a Portkey. Harry grinned at Dumbledore, “Back to Grimmauld Place, I assume.”

Dumbledore nodded, “Yes. Would you like to take us, or do I need to make a Portkey?”

Harry chuckled, “I’ll take us. Each of you grab one of my shoulders.” Dumbledore and Ginny each placed a hand on his shoulder. The three of them disappeared, and then reappeared in the kitchen of Grimmauld Place with a pop.

Molly gasped when they appeared. “Where have the two of you been?”

Harry backed up a step, “We sort of went after some Death Eaters.”

Molly burst out, “You did what?”

Ginny looked down at her feet, and left Harry to deal with her mother’s temper. Dumbledore interceded on their behalf. “It appears that Harry and Ginny felt that it was their duty to take revenge for what happened in Ottery-St. Catchpole last night.”

Molly advanced on the two teenagers, “Are you crazy? You could have been hurt. You had no right to decide something like that.”

Dumbledore interrupted her tirade, “Molly, Harry had every right to decide to go after the Death Eaters. He is the leader that we have been waiting for. The war against Voldemort will be run at his discretion from now on. You need to be prepared to take orders from him.”

Molly appeared to be flabbergasted. Ginny looked up at Dumbledore with her mouth hanging open. Harry smiled, “I take it this means that you are turning The Order of the Phoenix over to me.”

Dumbledore nodded, “As soon as the Order is assembled, I will be doing just that, Harry.”

Molly finally found her voice, “You can’t be serious, Albus.”

Dumbledore eyed her, "I assure you that I am, Molly. Also you will find that you are the only person that will have a problem with the concept. Everyone else in the Order recognizes the fact that Harry was born to do this. It is his destiny. I shall return with the Order." Dumbledore Disappeared away.

Molly looked at Harry pleadingly, "Harry, you can't accept this. You are still a boy."

Harry smiled down at Mrs. Weasley, and said gently, "Molly, this is something that I have to do. Just as your children know that it is their duty to fight against the Dark forces, it is my duty to lead them in that fight. As Dumbledore said, it is my destiny."

Molly hugged Harry and cried. Ginny joined the two of them, and Ron and Hermione came downstairs at the sound of crying to find the three of them in a mutual embrace.

Ron asked immediately, "What's the matter?"

Molly released the two teenagers, and began to wipe her eyes, "Nothing. I'm just being a bit stupid."

Ron persisted, "Then, what's going on?"

Harry motioned towards the table, and said, "Take a seat, and you'll find out as soon as the rest of the Order arrives."

Ron stopped dead in his tracks, "We get to stay in an Order meeting?"

Harry nodded, "Yes, I believe that it is time."

Molly looked stricken, but Harry caught the look and headed her off before she could say anything, "Don't worry, Molly. Just because I'm letting them join the meetings, doesn't mean that I am going to allow them to do anything dangerous. I intend to keep them as safe as possible. Tom's going to be getting really desperate, though. They need to know and understand what's going on."

Molly nodded, "I know. I still don't like it."

Harry shook his head as he gazed at the three people who were closer to him than any other, "Neither do I, Molly. Neither do I."

Hermione asked, "What did you mean by saying that you were letting us join the meetings? Isn't that up to Professor Dumbledore?"

Dumbledore chose that moment to reappear in the kitchen. He answered her question before Harry could respond, "Not anymore, Miss Granger. I am no longer the head of the Order of the Phoenix. It is Harry's turn to take the burden of leadership."

Harry turned to Dumbledore, "How long before everyone is assembled?"

Dumbledore checked his watch, "They should all be here shortly."

Harry nodded, "We might as well get ready."

A few minutes later witches and wizards began popping into the kitchen at Grimmauld Place. There was Alastor Moody, Hestia Jones, Dedalus Diggle, Elphias Doge, Dawlish, Bill, Charlie, Fred, George, and Arthur Weasley, Severus Snape, Minerva McGonagall, Kingsley Shacklebolt, Tonks, and Lupin. Dumbledore stood at the head of the table for the last time. "Greetings. We are here for a most auspicious occasion. I am prepared to lay down the leadership of the Order of the Phoenix to my rightful successor."

McGonagall interrupted him, "Albus, you cannot be seriously considering doing this."

Dumbledore continued, "I assure you that not only have I considered it, that I see it as the only possible course of action remaining to us. As most of you know, we are speaking of Harry Potter. It is with the deepest pride that I present the new leader of The Order of the Phoenix."

There was a rattle of applause around the table, especially from the group of Weasleys. Dumbledore stepped aside and Harry took his place at the head of the table. Lupin spoke, "Your parents would be proud, Harry."

Harry smiled, "Thanks, Remus. Now, on to business. Dawlish, how did the Ministry take to the news that Ginny and I captured those Death Eaters?"

Dawlish chuckled at the memory, "Fudge threw a fit. Davis and Amelia managed to convince him that he could gain nothing by doing anything, though. They dropped the charges against Ginny accepting the fact that she was performing magic to save your life."

Harry nodded, "That was expected. What about the prisoners? Where are you keeping them?"

Dawlish answered, "We have a detention center just outside of London where we are keeping any captured Death Eaters. It is bound by Apparition wards, and they are under constant guard."

Harry shook his head, "That's not good enough. Tom will discover where this facility is and attack soon enough. We need to transport the prisoners back to Azkaban."

Kingsley spoke up, "What good will that do? We don't have the number of Aurors that it would take to guard Azkaban. Without the Dementors on our side, we have little hope of holding that island."

Harry smiled, "What if I were to arrange the guards for the prison?"

Tonks asked, "What kind of guards?"

"I was thinking that golems would do nicely."

Lupin shook his head, "That won't work, Harry. We would need at least two-hundred and fifty golems to guard the prison effectively. Anything less and Voldemort would merely destroy them."

Harry shrugged, "So, what's the problem?"

Dumbledore answered, "Harry, there are only about a dozen golems in existence."

"So, we make new ones." said Harry matter-of-factly.

Kingsley spoke up, again, "It can't be done. I doubt Albus could make more than one or two. Most of the rest of us couldn't even make one. There's no way that we could create two-hundred and fifty."

Harry sighed, "You have a lot to learn about power, Kingsley. Don't assume that because you understand your own limitations that you could even begin to comprehend anyone else's."

Kingsley shot back, "What is that supposed to mean?"

Harry responded, "It means that someone can be immensely powerful at one thing and appear weak, simply because they do not reveal their talent. I know people that are amazingly gifted at Transfiguration, yet couldn't defend themselves in a duel. I know people that can duel excellently, but can't cast a simple Scouring Charm properly." Harry paused, as Tonks turned bright red. Harry smiled, "It's nothing to be ashamed of, Nymphadora."

"Don't call me Nymphadora." yelled Tonks.

The rest of the table smirked in amusement. Snape asked, "I still don't understand what you are getting at?"

Harry continued, "I am merely pointing out that just because you can't do something, do not assume that somebody else can't. It could even be someone that appears to be weaker than you. Hidden powers rarely make any sense."

Dawlish entered the conversation, "When do you think that we could get these golems?"

Harry cleared his throat, "Well, go get the Minister, and meet myself and Dumbledore at Azkaban in half an hour."

Dawlish immediately jumped up and Disapparated away. Kingsley looked at Harry in amazement, "You have got to be kidding me."

Harry shook his head, "No, Kingsley, I am not." Harry turned to the twins, "On to the next order of business. I need the two of you to work on something for me."

The twins nodded enthusiastically, “Anything, Harry.”

“I want a magical bomb that will explode with minor hexes and jinxes. Nothing dangerous, but just some things to confuse and disorient the opposition. I want it to function along the lines of a Muggle grenade.” Harry waved his hand and a book appeared on the table in front of the twins. “This book should explain anything that you need to know about Muggle explosives. Let me know what kind of funds you need for this project, and I’ll have it withdrawn from my vault.”

The twins immediately dove into the book. Harry turned his gaze back to the rest of the table, “Is there anything else that anyone needs to report?”

Heads shook around the table, so Harry continued, “Good, then I would like to welcome the newest members of the Order of the Phoenix. Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, and Ginny Weasley. If there is nothing else, I need to go meet the Minister.” Everyone got up from the table. Some of them disappeared away, while others remained. Fred and George appeared to be deep in conversation with their father, Bill, and Charlie. Ginny walked up to Harry and Dumbledore, “Can I go with you?”

Harry nodded, “If you want.”

Kingsley, Tonks, and Lupin joined them. Kingsley was the first one to speak up, “I would like to go as well.” Tonks and Lupin nodded to indicate that they wished to join the group as well.

“Let’s go then.” said Harry. He took Ginny’s hand and Apparated to Azkaban. The rest of the group wasn’t far behind.

Kingsley looked around at the golems in awe. Lupin managed to ask, “Are they real?”

Harry nodded, and Tonks asked, “Then, why aren’t they moving?”

Harry laughed lightly, “I haven’t activated them, yet. We are waiting for the Minister, and then I will set them to work.”

A few minutes later, Dawlish appeared with Fudge, Davis Weatherby, and Amelia Bones in tow. All four of them gasped at the array of golems before them.

Amelia spoke first, “Did you create these, Mr. Potter?”

“That I did, Madam Bones.”

Davis asked, “When?”

“A couple of days ago. I came out and laid down the enchantments necessary to create golems. Now, all that is left is to activate them.” Harry clapped his hands and the golems began to move. They arrayed themselves in a defensive formation around the castle, and began walking rounds. Harry grinned at Fudge, “Now, Minister, I have returned your prison to you. Fill it. I have other matters that need my attention.”

Fudge nodded in shock, “Yes, Mr. Potter.”

3. Animagus Training Begins

The next morning after breakfast, Ron and Hermione cornered Harry in his room. He looked up from the book that he was reading for Transfiguration and asked, “What?”

Both of his friends had extremely serious expressions on their faces. Hermione spoke first, “Harry, we want you to train us to be Animagi.”

Harry grinned, “I expected that. Give me a minute, and I will meet you in the upstairs parlor. There should be enough room for us to work in there.”

Ron looked amazed, “You mean that you’re really going to show us how today?”

“We’re going to get started today. You’re not going to be able to really start transforming for months.” said Harry bemusedly.

Ron’s face fell, “You mean that we aren’t going to be able to learn this quickly?”

Harry shook his head, “Of course not. The training to become an Animagus is long and arduous. People don’t accomplish it easily.”

Ron said accusingly, “You and Ginny did.”

Ginny walked into the room at that moment, “I did what?”

Ron turned to look at Ginny, “You became an Animagus easily.”

Harry chuckled, “Ginny and I cheated. We didn’t go through the training.”

Hermione asked, “I know how you cheated, Harry, but how did Ginny do it?”

“Well, I performed a charm that allowed me to put information directly into her brain. It was supposed to be to help her study and do her homework, but I decided to add the Animagus transformation to it. Then, all I had to do was show her how to use the knowledge.” explained Harry.

Ron asked, “Why don’t you do something like that for us?”

Harry shook his head, “You wouldn’t want me to, I promise.”

Ginny asked, “Why not?”

“A transfer like that will only work if the two parties involved have an alignment of souls.” said Harry.

Hermione’s curiosity was piqued at this point, “What does that mean?”

“Well, any two people can align their souls by sharing a Soul Bond. It was easy for Ginny and I to accomplish the transfer because our souls were already aligned. We share a very powerful Soul Bond.” Harry continued to explain.

Ron asked, “So, couldn’t you align our souls to yours or something?”

Harry nodded, “I could, but you wouldn’t like the consequences.”

Hermione asked, “What consequences? You and Ginny don’t seem to be any worse off for using the magic.”

“It’s a little different with Ginny and I. Our Soul Bond was natural. Anything that I perform on the two of you would be artificial. There would be adverse side effects from it.”

Ron seemed to be growing impatient, “What side effects?”

Harry sighed, “Well, there is one of two possibilities. Either the subject of the Soul Alignment will fall madly in love with the soul they are being aligned to, or the Soul Alignment will cause resentment in the subject.”

Ron appeared to be confused, “What does that mean?”

“Ron, it means that if I performed a Soul Alignment on the two of you, the most likely result would be that Hermione would fall hopelessly in love with me and that you would hate me for it. The hate would grow to so great a degree in you that you would attempt to kill me and I would be forced to kill you to stop you.” said Harry matter-of-factly.

Ron grimaced, “Okay, I take it that’s a bad idea.”

Hermione snorted, “That’s the biggest understatement of the year.”

Harry responded indignantly, “Hey! Would it be so terrible to be in love with me?”

Ginny answered before Hermione could say anything, “Yes, because if she started making passes at you, I would have to kill her.”

The four teenagers burst out laughing. Harry recovered first, “Alright, I need to go get some things for you. Now, get up to the parlor.” Ron and Hermione beat a hasty retreat from the room to get upstairs.

Ginny asked, “Can I come with you?”

Harry shook his head, “I’m going to Hogwarts. It would be too much of a strain to take you with me.”

“How are you going to get to Hogwarts? Are you saying that you can Apparate through the wards?” asked Ginny in amazement.

Harry grinned, “Yes, I can. There is a much easier way, though.”

“How?”

“Phoenixes can disappear and reappear anywhere. I have the same ability and the wards don’t govern that behavior. The same way that the wards won’t stop a house-elf from getting in and out of the castle. I’ll be back in a few minutes.” explained Harry.

Harry transformed into a phoenix, and then in a puff of smoke disappeared. He reappeared in Dumbledore’s office. The Headmaster gave a start of surprise. Harry transformed back into his human form. “Hello, Albus.”

Dumbledore grinned, “I take it that this is not a social call, or you would have used more conventional means.”

Fawkes trilled *Greetings, brother*

Harry smiled at the magnificent creature, “And to you, my friend.”

Dumbledore looked back and forth between his pet and his student, and sighed, “I don’t think that I will ever get used to that.”

Harry laughed shortly, “I guess not. I’m the only person to ever be able to do it, so I don’t guess that it is something you see everyday. The reason I’m here is to get some books from the library. Hermione and Ron have decided that they want to become Animagi, and I need some books to help them learn the theory behind it.”

Dumbledore nodded, “I expected something of this nature. I have already instructed Madam Pince to assist you in any way that you need.”

Harry smiled, “Sometimes I wonder if I really have to tell you anything. You seem to anticipate everything.”

Dumbledore eyed his pet phoenix and said, “Not quite.”

Harry laughed again, “Close enough. I’m going to go ahead and go to the library. Hermione and Ron will be waiting for me.”

Dumbledore nodded in dismissal, and Harry Disapparated away. Dumbledore immediately jumped up and ran down the stairs out of his office towards the library. He arrived to find Harry standing with Madam Pince picking out some books that he would need for them to study Animagus training. Dumbledore spoke immediately, "Harry, I need to speak with you. Irma, could you please give us a moment?"

The librarian nodded and walked back over to her desk. Harry looked at the expression on Dumbledore's face and asked, "What's wrong, Albus? You look like you just saw a ghost."

Dumbledore replied evenly, "I see ghosts all the time, Harry. What I am not accustomed to seeing is someone Apparating inside this castle."

"Sorry, it's a Muggle expression," said Harry.

"I am well aware of the origin of the expression, Harry. I was merely pointing out how unlikely it was for me to see someone Apparating through Anti-Disapparation wards," responded Dumbledore.

"I didn't Apparate through them. That would be even easier than what I just did. I Apparated around them," said Harry.

"I didn't know that you could do that," said Dumbledore in shock.

"For shame, sir. I am Harry Potter. I can do anything," said Harry with mock bravado. Then, he laughed easily. "I'm sorry. Some of my abilities are so second nature that I forget to explain what is about to happen to anyone else."

"Can you break through the wards?" asked Dumbledore.

"I could shatter them with a snap of my fingers," answered Harry. "This should be enough books for the others. Since they are waiting for me, I should go."

Dumbledore nodded, "Go ahead. You surprised me. I didn't expect this to come with your amazing healing powers. Next, you will be healing people's minds."

Harry froze and then a slow smile spread across his face, "Albus, you're a genius."

Dumbledore looked at Harry in bewilderment, "What are you talking about, Harry?"

Harry replied easily, "Frank and Alice Longbottom."

"Can you really do it?"

Harry nodded enthusiastically, "Of course. I can heal anything. I should even be able to break the Memory Charm on Lockhart. Although I think that I should probably leave him in St. Mungos. He can't cause any trouble in there."

Dumbledore frowned in disapproval, "Harry, that isn't funny."

Harry snorted, "Considering the fact that he was trying to put Memory Charms on me and Ron at the time, I think that it is. Ginny would have died that day if Ron's wand hadn't blown up in Lockhart's face." Harry shuddered, "That's a thought that I don't want to ever have again. I'm going to go."

Dumbledore smiled, "I will meet you at St. Mungos."

"Okay, I'm going to drop these books off at Grimmauld Place and give Hermione and Ron something to do before they tear my house down bickering." Harry Disapparated away, and Dumbledore shook his head in silent amusement.

Harry popped back into existence in Grimmauld Place to find Ginny, Ron, and Hermione waiting for him in the parlor. Harry dropped the pile of books onto the table. Ron groaned, while Hermione's eyes lit up. "First things first. You need to read the books about the theory of becoming an Animagus. It will show you the steps to focusing your mind for the transformation. Then, you need to look through all these books on different kinds of animals. The more you know about the animal that you want to turn into, the easier the transformation will be ultimately. I have to run an errand. I'm going to leave the two of you. I expect you to have read a good deal about the theory by the time that I return. We will start doing some rudimentary exercises when I return."

Ron protested, "Why do we have to do all this reading? Why can't you just teach us the focusing techniques?"

Harry pointed to the books, "I will still have to teach you everything that you read. It will be a lot easier if you read it first. I have other things that I need to go do, and you don't have anything pressing to do."

"Yeah, but if I wanted more homework, I could have just played a prank on Snape." muttered Ron.

Harry snorted, "That would net you a lot more than just extra homework. So, read the books if you want me to teach you to become an Animagus."

"So, are you saying that if I don't read all this stuff that you won't teach me?" asked Ron.

Harry responded, "Let me put it this way. I will know if you haven't read it when I return, and I don't intend to waste my time if you aren't going to take this seriously."

Ron continued to grumble as he slid one of the books toward him. Hermione, as usual, already had her nose buried in the book. Harry turned to Ginny, "Do you want to go with me?"

Ginny asked, "Where are we going?"

Harry shook his head, "I can't tell you, yet. It's going to be a surprise for everyone else."

Ginny nodded, "Alright, let's go." Ginny placed her hand in Harry's and the two of them disappeared.

Ron, looked over at Hermione, "Where do you think the two of them went?"

Hermione shrugged, "I have no idea. I assume that Harry will tell us later. Now, you need to get to work. I am not going through all this training alone. Start reading."

Ron muttered something that sounded distinctly like slave driver, but Hermione wisely chose not to comment on it.

Harry and Ginny appeared in the foyer of St. Mungos. Dumbledore was standing there waiting on them. Harry smiled, "Hello, Albus. Do you have any idea who you need to talk to for me to do this?"

Dumbledore nodded, "I have already requested a meeting with Algywn Filch. She is the Head Healer. Hello, Miss Weasley."

Ginny smiled, "Hello, Professor."

Harry raised his eyebrows at the sound of the name, "Would she by any chance be related to our caretaker?"

Dumbledore nodded, "Algywn is Argus' aunt. She has a much nicer disposition than Argus, so don't worry."

A healer walked up to the three of them. "Professor Dumbledore, Healer Filch will see you now. If you will follow me, I will take you to her office."

Dumbledore nodded and Harry and Ginny followed the healer with him. She led them through several winding passages. Then, up to a nondescript door that read merely, 'Algywn Filch, Head Healer, St. Mungos. The healer opened the door to an empty office. "Healer Filch will be with you shortly."

Dumbledore, Harry, and Ginny walked in and settled themselves into three plush armchairs that appeared when they walked into the room. They had waited only a few moments when an aged woman walked in through another door and sat down behind the desk. “Albus, to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?”

“Algwyn, I will leave the details up to our young Mr. Potter to explain. I merely came to insure that you would spare the time to listen to him.” answered Dumbledore.

Algwyn turned to Harry and smiled, “Go ahead, Mr. Potter. What have you come to see me about?”

Harry smiled, “First of all, call me Harry. I don’t much care for formality.”

Algwyn smiled and laughed, “Then, Harry, I am afraid that you are in for a nasty shock.”

Harry looked to Dumbledore for clarification, and Dumbledore smiled, “She’s right on that note, but I will explain later. Now is not the time.”

Harry shrugged, “As you wish. Healer Filch, I have come here today to heal everyone in your long term wards.”

Algwyn’s eyes widened in surprise, “Of all the things that I expected to hear from you, Harry, that was not something I had entertained. Are you certain that you can do something of that magnitude?”

Harry nodded, “Of course. I don’t attempt things like this without knowing that I will succeed. The consequences of failure can be dire.”

Algwyn turned to Albus, “Do you think that he can do this?”

Dumbledore smiled, “I have watched this young man grow his entire life. If he says that he can do something, then there is no doubt in my mind that he can.”

“Very well. Follow me, Harry. I want to see this with my own eyes.” said Algwyn.

The four of them made their way up to the fourth floor. Algwyn unlocked the door to the ward for people cursed with permanent spell damage. Harry immediately noticed Gilderoy Lockhart crooning to himself. Frank and Alice Longbottom were in a corner lying in bed. There were several other people around the ward that Harry did not know. He motioned to the far end of the room. “I’ll start down there.” Harry walked the length of the room and stopped by a bed. He placed his hands on the person lying in the bed and muttered words in a strange language under his breath.

The patient jumped out of bed and exclaimed, “I feel great!” Several of the healers in the room fainted, immediately.

Dumbledore brought them around while everyone else gawked at Harry in shock. Harry ignored all of this. He was already moving on to the next patient. He continued to do this in turn. He would lay his hands on the patient, and then mutter under his breath. Each patient would then jump up out of bed, totally cured of whatever ailment that had possessed them. This continued until only Gilderoy Lockhart and the Longbottoms remained.

Harry turned to Dumbledore, “Be ready to get him out of here as soon as I cure him. If he starts talking to me, I might strangle him.”

Dumbledore nodded, and Harry proceeded to break through the backfired Memory Charm that had robbed Gilderoy of his memories so long ago. As soon as Harry was finished, Dumbledore hit Gilderoy with a Silencing Spell, and quickly hustled him out of the room. Harry turned to the Longbottoms and smiled. He looked over at Ginny and said, “I hope Neville likes his Christmas present early.”

Ginny smiled, “I know that he will. Harry, have I told you how much that I love you?”

Harry shook his head, “Not today.”

Ginny frowned, “Then, I should be ashamed of myself.”

Harry laughed, “I think that is my line.”

Ginny laughed with him, "Well, I took it today."

Harry turned from her and placed one hand on each of the Longbottom's foreheads. He chanted under his breath, and then slumped slightly after he was finished. He opened his eyes to look at the two Aurors that had spent so much of their lives in the hospital.

Frank smiled at him, "Harry Potter. You look just like your father."

Alice shook her head, "Not quite. Those are Lily's eyes."

Harry grinned at them, "For some reason, I hear that a lot."

Frank chuckled, "I imagine so. Everyone that knew your parents can see them living still through you."

Dumbledore placed a hand on Harry's shoulder from behind, "Yes, we can. They would be proud of their son. He has done so much for this world."

Frank sighed, "I imagine that we have a lot of catching up to do. It has been a long time since Bellatrix tortured us."

Dumbledore nodded, "You have no idea. Voldemort has returned, and we have called the Order of the Phoenix back into action."

Alice gasped, "You aren't serious."

Dumbledore nodded, "I am afraid that I am, Alice. There is much that you must be told."

Frank nodded firmly, "Just tell us what you need us to do, Albus. We will follow you anywhere."

Dumbledore shook his head, "I am afraid that I am not in charge of the Order any longer. We have a new leader."

Alice asked, "Who?"

Dumbledore placed his other hand on Harry's other shoulder, "Our young Mr. Potter here is the leader of The Order of the Phoenix."

Frank grinned, "You are definitely James and Lily's son. What are your orders?"

Harry replied simply, "For the two of you to come with me. I am taking you to meet your son. I want all three of you to spend the summer together and get to know each other. Once school is back in session, then I will call you into activity with the Order. After that we'll have to speak to Cornelius and Dawlish. We'll get both of you reinstated at the Ministry as Aurors." Harry waved his hand and changed both of their clothing.

Alice gasped, "Where is your wand?"

Harry grinned, "I don't need a wand to perform magic."

Frank's eyes widened, "How did you pull that off?"

Harry shrugged, "That is a very long story. One that I will let Neville tell you. If you need to know anything else after that, I will fill in the holes. Now, let's go." Ginny put a hand on Harry's shoulder. Harry placed a hand on each of the Longbottom's arms, and Disapparated them all to the Longbottom home.

They appeared in the living room with a pop. There was no one present when they appeared. Harry motioned for the others to remain silent. He slipped into the kitchen to find Mrs. Longbottom pointing her wand at the stove to begin preparing an early dinner. Harry spoke, "Mrs. Longbottom."

She spun around and leveled her wand at Harry. She stopped when she saw who it was and asked, "Are you looking for Neville, dear?"

Harry nodded, "Yes. I was looking for both of you."

“You’ll have to wait just a bit on Neville. I sent him down to the store to pick up some vegetables.” said Mrs. Longbottom.

Harry smiled, “That’s okay. The news will be just as good in a little while as it is now.”

“What news?” asked Mrs. Longbottom.

Harry looked at her appraisingly, “This is going to be quite a shock. You might want to sit down.” Mrs. Longbottom appeared to be amused, but she did as Harry asked without question. Harry stepped back out of the kitchen and said, “You can come in now.”

Dumbledore, Ginny, and the Longbottoms walked into the kitchen. Mrs. Longbottom jumped to her feet, “Frank, Alice.”

Frank smiled, “Good evening, Mother.” Alice merely smiled.

“Is it really you?” asked Mrs. Longbottom.

Frank nodded, “Yes, Mother, it is really us. We’re just fine.”

“How?” she managed to ask.

Alice motioned to Harry, “Harry Potter healed us. Actually he healed everyone in the permanent spell damage ward. I’m sure it will be in the Prophet tomorrow.”

Mrs. Longbottom rushed over to hug her son and daughter-in-law. Then, she grabbed Harry in a hug that Mrs. Weasley would have envied. “I don’t know how I can ever thank you.”

Harry smiled at all of them, “I don’t need to be thanked. Any of you would have done the same for me. Your grandson has been a great help to me over the years. He stood by me in the Department of Mysteries a little over a year ago, when most people would have run in terror. I could think of no better way to repay him.”

Mrs. Longbottom released Harry from the hug only to be replaced by Alice. Alice asked, “How long until we get to see Neville?”

Mrs. Longbottom answered, “He should be home anytime now.”

Harry grinned, “I think that I will go meet him. Maybe I can soften the surprise a bit. I would hate for him to faint.” Harry walked out of the house and down the street. He had only gone a couple of blocks when he spotted Neville returning with a bushel of vegetables. “Hey, Neville.”

Neville turned to look at Harry, “Hey, Harry. What are you doing here?”

Harry grinned broadly as he fell into step beside Neville, “I got to thinking the other day. I don’t think that I have ever given you a birthday or a Christmas present. So, I decided that I needed to do something for you.”

Neville shook his head, “You didn’t have to get me anything, Harry.”

Harry nodded, “I know, but I have a feeling that you are going to like your present. Give me those vegetables. I’d hate for you to drop them when you see it.”

“Is it that surprising?” asked Neville.

“Nothing could be better.” said Harry.

Neville smiled, “Not to insult your gift or anything, Harry, but the only thing that I truly want is for my parents to be out of Mungos for good.”

“Granted.” said Harry.

Neville stopped dead in his tracks, “What?”

“I said, Granted. You get your wish. Your parents are out of St. Mungos and waiting for you in your house.” answered Harry. Harry laughed in delight as Neville bolted for the front door of his house. Harry had to Apparate to get there ahead of him.

Neville burst in the door to see his mother and father standing there waiting for him. He cried out, "Mum, Dad." Then, he ran and grabbed his mother in a hug. He turned to Harry, "I.. Thank you."

Harry waved him off, "Don't say anything. I just gave you what you deserved. Enjoy your summer, Neville. I have to get back home."

Frank stuck out his hand, "We can never repay you for what you've done."

Harry shook his hand, "Seeing people that Voldemort has hurt happy again is all the payment I need. I'll see you all at some later date." He turned to Ginny, "Shall we go, my love?"

Ginny nodded and smiled, "Yes, Mr. Potter, we shall." Ginny took his hand and Harry Apparated to Grimmauld Place. They found Ron and Hermione holed up in the parlor reading.

Ron looked up when they entered, "What took you so long? It's almost dinnertime, and Hermione has been making me read all day."

Harry laughed, "I'm sorry, but it took longer than I thought to accomplish what I wanted to do."

"Which was?" asked Hermione without looking up from her book.

Harry shook his head, "Oh no. You're not going to get it out of me that easily. You'll just have to wait. Ron, you'll be happy to know that you don't have to read anymore today. Let's go eat, and then we will do some practical work before bed."

Ron gave a cheer of relief while Hermione frowned at him. Ginny laughed and the four of them walked downstairs to the kitchen to eat. They spent some time after dinner working on the focusing techniques without making much progress. Hermione especially seemed to be frustrated with the lack of progress. Harry smiled at her, "Don't worry. It just takes time. I didn't really expect either of you to be able to alter your shape this soon. It will take days of constant effort before you are even able to make the smallest change without your wand."

This did little to console Hermione, but she did stop grumbling.

The next morning the four Gryffindors were sitting down to the breakfast table when the post owl arrived. Hermione opened the Daily Prophet, and began to read. A moment later she spit her pumpkin juice out in shock. It splattered all over Harry, who was sitting across from her at the table. "Thank you, Hermione. I needed some pumpkin juice in my face to wake me up this morning."

Hermione pointed at the newspaper, "Did you really do this?"

Harry leaned over to look at the newspaper, "Do what?" He saw the article about St. Mungos. "Oh, that. Yeah, that was what took so long yesterday."

Ron tried to look over Hermione's shoulder, but she brushed him away. Ron asked, "What did he do?"

Hermione began to read the article out loud, "In a surprise occurrence yesterday at St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries, the entire Permanent Spell Damage ward was discharged and released from the hospital. According to eyewitnesses, Harry James Potter, a.k.a. The Boy Who Lived, came to the hospital early yesterday for a meeting with Head Healer Algwyn Filch. Healer Filch informed the papers that Harry Potter healed every member of the ward of the ailments with which they had been afflicted. The most famous patients in the ward included Frank and Alice Longbottom, and Gilderoy Lockhart. Mr. Potter was unavailable for comment, since no one seems to know where he spends his summers, but as soon as we can arrange an interview we will publish it for our readers. The patients of St. Mungos have only this to say to our young hero. Thank you."

Ron looked over at Harry in shock, "You healed an entire ward." It was a statement not a question.

Harry nodded, "Yeah, it was actually a bit tiring, too. I'm going to have to take it easy for a few days on what magic I use."

Hermione smiled, "You never cease to amaze me, Harry. You healed Neville's parents."

Harry nodded, "He was quite happy to see them."

Hermione nodded, "I'm sure that he was."

Ginny leaned her head on Harry's shoulder, "I love you, Harry."

Harry smiled down at Ginny, "I love you too, Miss Weasley."

Ron looked disgusted, "Ugh, don't make me sick."

Harry grinned mischievously, "If that made you sick, then this should really turn your stomach." He spun Ginny in the seat, and planted both his lips on hers in a passionate and fiery kiss. Ron ran out of the room, while Hermione smiled at the two of them and averted her gaze until they were through.

Ginny said breathlessly, "At least now we know how to get rid of Ron when he's being a pain." The three teenagers burst out laughing, and didn't stop until they could no longer breathe.

4. Harry's Birthday

The first few weeks of summer flew by. The teenagers performed various cleaning chores around the house. Hermione and Ron spent a great deal of time studying to become Animagi. They had begun to make some progress. Ron appeared to have a little more talent for the transformation than Hermione did. He could make slight changes to his facial structure, while Hermione was still working on her hands.

The day before Harry's birthday, Harry and Ron were sitting at the breakfast table discussing Quidditch. The two of them along with Fred, George, Ginny, and whoever else happened to be around had went to play at Potter Manor a couple of times over the intervening weeks. Harry said, "I think that we need to have a full game of Quidditch, tomorrow."

Ron nodded, "That would be great if we could get enough players. We've got me and you, Ginny, Fred, George, Bill, and Charlie. That's one full team. We just need to come up with another seven players."

Harry grinned, "If push comes to shove, we can make Hermione play. She won't like it very much, but she will because its my birthday."

Ron snorted, "I will have to see that to believe it, but who else are we going to get?"

Harry starting making a list, "Well, I can Apparate to their houses and see who can come. I'd say that we need to check with Neville, Seamus, Dean, Luna, and the Creeveys. That's six. That gives us two full teams if Hermione plays."

Ron waved a hand, "Go to it. See who you can get."

Harry nodded, "Alright. I'll go in just a minute."

Ginny walked into the room, "Go where?"

Harry looked up, "How would you feel about getting a full Quidditch game going tomorrow?"

Ginny smiled, "I say it's a great idea."

"Good. That's where I'm going. I'm going to pop around to some people's houses and see if they can come play tomorrow." said Harry.

"Who?" asked Ginny.

"You'll see. I have to go ahead and get out of here. The first people that I ask might not be able to come. I'll have to find some more to ask if they can't." said Harry. He Disapparated away.

Ginny shook her head, "It is impossible to keep track of that boy."

Ron laughed, "I can imagine. He takes off at the drop of a hat, and nobody can track him. I wouldn't be surprised if he could Apparate in Hogwarts."

Hermione walked into the kitchen as Ron said this, "Ron, how many times do I have to tell you that you can't Apparate in Hogwarts."

Ginny smirked, "Hermione, do you believe everything that you read?"

Hermione nodded, "As long as its from a reliable source."

"Don't. Nobody knows everything." Then, Ginny walked out of the kitchen.

Hermione looked at Ron in bewilderment, "What was that supposed to mean?"

Ron shrugged, "I have no idea. I gave up trying to understand Ginny a long time ago. She has only gotten more mysterious since she started dating Harry."

Hermione smiled, "At least she makes him happy."

Ron nodded, "There is that."

Harry popped into existence at the Longbottom house. Frank was sitting on the couch with Alice and Neville. The three of them were talking. Frank looked at Harry in concern, "Is anything wrong, Harry?"

Harry grinned and shook his head, "No. I just came by to see if Neville wanted to play some Quidditch at my house tomorrow. It's my birthday and we're trying to get two full teams together."

Neville nodded, "I'd love to come play. I don't have a broom, though."

Harry shook his head, "It doesn't matter. My parents brooms are at the house. We have a couple of spares on top of that. It should be fine."

"I'll be there, then." said Neville.

Frank smiled, "What position do you play, Harry?"

Harry grinned, "I am James Potter's son. I would think that it would be obvious."

Alice giggled, "I would love to see you play."

Harry said, "All of you should come. We're going to have a lot of fun."

Frank nodded, "We'll be there. Any specific time?"

Harry nodded, "About lunchtime. We're going to eat, and then play. I've got to go. There are other people to invite." Harry popped out of existence, and reappeared at Seamus' house. Seamus' mother screamed when Harry appeared in her living room. "Hello, Mrs. Finnigan."

Seamus beamed, "That was brilliant, mate."

"Why are you here, Harry?" asked Mrs. Finnigan.

Harry grinned, "I just came to see if Seamus can come to my house tomorrow to play Quidditch."

Seamus' eyes lit up, "Can I go, Mum?"

Mrs. Finnigan smiled, "I suppose. What is the Floo address?"

"Just say Potter Manor. We'll be waiting there around noon. Anyway gotta go. There are more people to invite. See you tomorrow, Seamus. Bye, Mrs. Finnigan." Harry Disapparated, and reappeared at Dean's house. This caused a great deal of confusion, considering that Dean's parents were Muggles. Dean's mother fainted dead away. Harry caught her and laid her on the couch, just as Dean ran into the room.

"Harry, what did you do?" asked Dean.

Harry grinned sheepishly, "I think that I scared your mother half to death."

Dean nodded, "Apparating directly into my living room would tend to do that."

"Sorry." Harry waved his hand at her, "Enervate."

Dean's mother opened her eyes and asked, "What happened?"

Dean chuckled, "One of my friends from school popped in. Mum, I would like you to meet Harry Potter."

Harry stepped into view and offered his hand in greeting, "My apologies for frightening you, Mrs. Thomas. I wasn't thinking about the fact that Dean was Muggle-Born."

Mrs. Thomas narrowed her eyes, "Do you have a problem with Muggle Born wizards?"

Harry laughed, "Of course not. My mum was Muggle Born. I was referring to the fact that most Muggles aren't accustomed to people appearing out of thin air in their homes. Most wizards are."

Mrs. Thomas' expression softened, "Oh." She took Harry's hand and shook it. "I'm pleased to meet you, then."

Dean looked over at Harry, "What are you doing here, Harry?"

Harry grinned, "We're putting together a killer Quidditch game at my house tomorrow for my birthday. I thought that you would like to come play."

Dean grinned, "Can I go, Mum?"

Mrs. Thomas smiled, "I suppose. I hope that it isn't too far to drive, though. I hate long trips."

"Don't worry about that. I can come get him tomorrow. We'll be there in an instant." said Harry.

Mrs. Thomas asked, "Would it be possible for me to come as well? I wouldn't want to intrude, but I have heard Dean talk about Quidditch, and I would like to see a game."

Harry nodded enthusiastically, "Of course. The more the merrier. Neville's parents are coming too. That's settled. I'll be here to get you at noon."

Dean grinned, "I'll be ready, mate."

Harry waved a hand, "See ya." Then, he disappeared.

Mrs. Thomas looked at Dean, "I thought that you couldn't use magic outside of school."

Dean nodded, "You're right. We can't until we're seventeen. Harry has always been able to get away with a lot more than anyone else, though. He's special."

"You mean he gets special treatment because of who he is?"

"Yeah, but he deserves it." said Dean.

Mrs. Thomas shook her head, "No one deserves special treatment."

"Harry does. He breaks all the rules, but it is always for a good cause. That boy has saved more people's lives than anyone else could imagine attempting." said Dean.

"What are you talking about? Whose lives have been in danger?" asked Mrs. Thomas.

"Pretty well everybody's. Mum, there are a lot of things that I have never told you about the wizarding world. I think that it is time that you heard the tale of Harry Potter."

"There's a tale about him?" inquired Mrs. Thomas with skepticism apparent in her voice.

Dean chuckled, "There's a whole lot more than one. Harry is the most famous wizard in the world. The most powerful, too. You probably need to sit down, Mum. After I tell you this story, you will probably regret ever having let me go to Hogwarts."

Harry went straight from Dean's house to the Creevey's. Although, he had learned his lesson this time. He Apparated into an alleyway close to the house. Then, he walked up to the front door and rang the bell. Dennis answered the door. He stopped and did a double-take. Then, he yelled, "Colin, Harry Potter is here."

Colin came racing down the stairs and said, "Wow. I never expected you to be at my house, Harry."

Harry grinned, "Are you going to invite me in, or do I have to wait out on the porch?"

Dennis quickly motioned Harry into the house. A woman that was obviously the Creevey's mother bustled into the hallway. She stopped upon sighting Harry, "Well, what do we have here. Are you one of Colin and Dennis' friends from school?"

Harry smiled at the woman, "Something like that. My name is Harry Potter." He held out his hand.

She smiled back at him and took his hand, "I'm Dennis and Colin's mother. Wait, did you just say Harry Potter?"

"Yes, ma'am." answered Harry.

The woman pulled him into a hug. "Colin told me all about what you did four years ago. He said that you saved him, and killed a giant magical snake."

Harry chuckled, "Unfortunately, your son has a bad habit of exaggerating when it comes to me. Madam Pomfrey and Professor Sprout are the ones that saved him. Although, he's right about the giant snake. That thing was sixty feet long."

Colin piped up as his mother released Harry, "So, Harry, what did you come over for?"

"Tomorrow is my birthday, and we're organizing a full Quidditch game. We need fourteen players to form two full teams. We thought that the two of you would like to come play," answered Harry.

Dennis jumped for joy, "Of course we would. Mum, can we go?"

Their mother smiled, "I suppose. You will have to give me directions to your home, Harry."

Harry shook his head, "I'll come get them. It's no big deal, really. Just don't faint when I appear from nowhere in your living room at noon tomorrow."

She looked at him, "Can you really do that?"

Harry chuckled, "Be standing in your living room at noon tomorrow and you will see it first hand."

Colin asked, "Who else is going to be playing?"

"All the Weasleys, Hermione, Neville, Dean, Seamus, and me so far. That leaves us one player short. I'm hopping over to Luna Lovegood's house next. I'm sure that she will come since Neville is going to be there," said Harry.

Colin nodded, "We'll see you at noon tomorrow then."

"Bye, Colin. Bye Dennis. It was nice to have met you, Mrs. Creevey." Harry Disapparated and headed for Luna Lovegood's home. He arrived in what could at the best of times be called a mass of confusion. The house was a jumble of old Quibbler magazines. Boards and notes lay strewn all over the place. Some were tacked up on the wall. Others were flying around in circles above some man's head. Harry cleared his throat to gain the man's attention. "Excuse me, sir. I'm looking for Luna."

The man paid him little attention as he said, "Up the stairs. Second door on the right."

Harry shook his head in silent amusement as he made his way up the stairs. He knocked on the second door, and Luna answered it. Her room was in little better shape than the downstairs had been. "Hi, Luna."

She had her wand stuffed behind her ear as usual. "Hello, Harry. Why are you in my home?"

"I came by to see if you would like to come over to my house tomorrow and play Quidditch with us. Neville is going to be there with his parents."

Luna smiled, "Yes, Neville wrote me telling me how you healed his parents." She leaned up and pecked him on the cheek. "I want to thank you for what you did. It has made him very happy."

Harry smiled, "I was glad to do it. Now, about tomorrow?"

Luna nodded, "I would love to come. I'm not very good at Quidditch, though. I'll play, however."

Harry grinned, "Great. Just say Potter Manor in the Floo. Everyone's going to be there at noon."

Luna said, "I'll see you tomorrow, Harry."

"Bye, Luna." Harry Disapparated back to Grimmauld Place to find Ginny Weasley waiting for him. "Hi, Ginny."

"You've been gone long enough," she said.

Harry shrugged, "It took a while to round up players. I had to talk to everyone's parents. Luna's dad is weird. I made Dean's mum faint. I don't think that she has ever had anyone Apparate right beside her before."

Ginny clapped a hand to her mouth, "Dean's parents are Muggles, Harry."

Harry let out a long breath, "I know. I didn't think about that fact until it was just a little bit too late."

Ginny giggled, "Oh well. What's done is done. Do you feel up to a little exercise?"

Harry nodded, "Sure, what did you have in mind?"

"I want you to work with me on my swordplay."

"Alright, the upstairs parlor should give us enough room to work out if we move all the furniture." said Harry.

Ginny shook her head, "That's no good. Ron and Hermione are in there."

"What are they doing?" asked Harry.

Ginny snorted, "They claim to be working on their Animagus transformation, but you don't have to put a Locking Charm, Silencing Charm, and an Imperturbable Charm on the door to study."

"Couldn't you have just broken through the Charms and spied on them?"

Ginny gave Harry a dirty look, "Since Ron is the only one in that room old enough to cast the spells without the Ministry sending an owl, of course I could have. I want to know why I would, though. Seeing Hermione and Ron snogging is not high on my list of priorities. I've caught them twice before, and that was two times too many."

Harry laughed, "I guess that we will just have to find somewhere else to practice." Harry slapped his forehead after a moment's thought. "We can go to the Manor. There is an excellent training room, there."

Ginny smiled, "That will be perfect. We better tell Mum that we're going, though."

Harry nodded, "I'll tell her." Harry walked into the kitchen. "Molly, Ginny and I are going to pop over to the Manor for a little while."

"What for?" asked Molly.

"Ginny wants me to help her with her sword technique, and Ron and Hermione are using the only room big enough for us to practice in here. So, we're going to be using the training room at the Manor." answered Harry.

Molly nodded, "I suppose. Be back in time for dinner."

Harry smiled, "I would never dream of missing your wonderful cooking."

Molly snorted, "Are you trying to say that you like my food?"

Harry chuckled, "If I didn't like your food, Molly, I would have died a long time ago. You have been making me eat third and fourth helpings of everything that you make for years now."

Molly blushed, "You were always so skinny. I was trying to fatten you up."

Harry looked down at his own body, "It worked somewhat. I'm not the little scarecrow that I used to be."

Molly smiled, "There is that. I'll expect you both back shortly."

Harry called back over his shoulder, "Don't worry, we won't be terribly long."

Shortly after Harry and Ginny had left, Dumbledore popped into the kitchen of Grimmauld Place. "Molly, is Harry around?"

Molly shook her head, "No. He and Ginny are over at the Manor practicing sword techniques. Apparently Ginny asked for some extra tutoring."

Dumbledore chuckled, "I am sure that our young Mr. Potter was only too happy to comply."

Molly joined Albus in his laughter, "Yes, he was. It is amazing how those two finally found their way to each other. Ginny had such a crush on him for years. He never paid a bit of attention. She finally gave up, and then it snowballed. Harry seemed to be drawn to her."

Dumbledore sighed, "It was as it should be. While she still had the childhood crush on him, Ginny couldn't relax enough to let Harry get to know the real her. Once she did, he didn't have a chance. I could see that a long time ago."

Molly looked at Albus questioningly, "You seem to know a great deal about the course of their relationship."

Dumbledore smiled faintly, "I have watched Harry from afar his entire life. It was impossible to watch him and not notice the behavior of Miss Virginia Weasley. Now, I must be jogging. I have to have a long talk with Harry about what is going to happen the day after tomorrow."

Molly asked, "Do you really think that he is ready for all that, Albus? You know how Harry hates to be the center of attention."

Dumbledore shrugged, "Whether he hates it or not is irrelevant. Harry will always be center stage. He knows that and accepts it. I just have to warn him of what is coming. I don't want it all to be a shock. I intentionally intercepted the letter from the Ministry so that I would be the one to tell him."

Dumbledore then Apparated to Potter Manor. When he arrived, he discovered Harry and Ginny in the training room. Both of them had their swords drawn. They were circling each other warily, and then Ginny attacked. Harry parried easily, and used his superior strength to drive her backwards and off balance. Then, he slapped the flat of the blade lightly against her thigh.

Harry smiled knowingly, "You would be hobbling at this point, dear."

Ginny frowned furiously, "I know. Why can't I do this?"

"You can. It will just take time."

"I don't want it to take time. Can't you make me better at it? You know the way you did with my Animagus form." asked Ginny.

Harry nodded, "I can, but it won't be evident for several days, and you will still have to work to enhance the knowledge."

"Let's do that then." said Ginny.

Harry chuckled, "I am afraid that it will have to wait. Albus has been standing in the doorway watching us for several minutes now. I think that he wants to talk to us."

Dumbledore stepped into the room, "How did you know that I was hiding there, Harry?"

Harry looked exasperated, "You really don't think that I would allow anyone to sneak up on me in my own house, do you? I have wards around the Manor that warn me when anyone Apparates into the house. I knew you were here the moment you landed in the sitting room."

Dumbledore smiled, "I'm impressed."

"Thank you. What did you want to talk to us about?" asked Harry.

"I see that you wish to get right to the point. Harry, do you remember when Algywyn said that you were in for a nasty shock?"

Harry nodded, "How could I forget?"

"Well, today I am here to explain what that nasty shock is." said Dumbledore.

Harry sighed, "I take it that you are going to want me to sit down first."

Dumbledore chuckled, "It would probably be better if both of you did."

Ginny's face brightened, "You mean that I get to find out what is going on?"

"Yes, Miss Weasley. It isn't really a secret, or at least it won't be the day after tomorrow. Follow me." He led the two teenagers into the kitchen, where all three of them sat down. "Tea?" asked Dumbledore while waving his wand and a full tea service appeared. Harry and Ginny both nodded. Dumbledore poured three cups of tea and passed them around. Then, he cleared his throat, "Harry, it is time that I told you about your lineage."

Harry protested, "I already know that I am the Heir of Gryffindor. What else could there be?"

Dumbledore smiled, "There is a great deal that goes along with being the Heir of Gryffindor, my young friend. To tell this story properly, we will have to go back to the days of Merlin. In those days, your parents gave you your familiar name, and children chose their own surname when they came of age. Merlin had two sons. The younger one chose the surname Dumbledore. That surname was passed from father to son after that. So, the Dumbledores became the first house to keep the same surname through multiple generations."

Ginny's mouth fell open, "So, you are a descendant of Merlin?"

Dumbledore nodded, "Indeed I am. Merlin's eldest son chose a different surname. Then his son after him. Merlin's great grandchild was given the familiar name, Godric. I'm sure that you can guess what surname that he chose."

Harry grinned knowingly, "Godric Gryffindor was Merlin's Great Grandson. That means that I am the Heir of Gryffindor as well as Merlin."

"Very true, Harry. However, the story becomes even more intriguing. Godric had one son. He chose a different surname. Godric's son, however, had two sons. The elder chose the surname Potter. His lineage passed on the surname from that point forward. All the way down to you. They also passed on a title. That of Lord Gryffindor."

Harry frowned, "So, are you saying that I am a Lord?"

Dumbledore nodded, "I am afraid so. There is much that goes with this title. For you see the younger of those two sons kept his lineage pure, and held the surname after that point. His family is now the current royal family of Britain."

Harry spit out his tea. Ginny dropped her glass to the floor. "Are you saying that I am related to the Queen?!" Harry exclaimed.

"That, Harry, is precisely what I am saying. As Lord Gryffindor, you are ninth in succession to the throne. The Queen and yourself are cousins. The title carries with it a great deal of prestige in the wizarding world. In the Muggle world it brings with it estates and a great deal of money." explained Dumbledore.

"Wait a minute. So, you're saying that I'm even richer than I already thought."

"Several times over, Harry." said Dumbledore.

"How rich?" asked Harry.

Dumbledore smiled, "Well, your wizard estates and gold in your Gringott's vault would be valued in the Muggle world at just over ten million pounds."

Harry sucked in a breath, "I knew that my wizard fortune was worth quite a bit, but I didn't realize that it was that much."

"Your Muggle estates and bank accounts at last check were worth well in excess of one-hundred and twenty million pounds." stated Dumbledore firmly.

It was Harry's turn to drop his glass. Ginny squeaked in shock, and turned to stare at Harry in amazement. She smiled, "Who would have known? I just thought I was falling in love with a wonderful young wizard. I never expected a member of the royal family, and rich to boot."

Harry smirked at her, "Well, this is going to be interesting. I don't know what I could humanly do with all that money."

Dumbledore chuckled, "You will probably do what most of your ancestors have done. Spend some of it, and let the rest lie around in banks earning interest."

"Sounds like a plan to me. The entire Gryffindor Quidditch team is getting new brooms this year, though." said Harry matter-of-factly.

“I am afraid that there is more, Harry.” said Dumbledore.

“What else?” asked Harry.

“The day after your birthday, you will have to go to the Ministry for your official ceremony granting you the title of Lord Gryffindor. The day after that, you are required to be at the Palace to meet the Queen, and allow her aides to plan your presentation ceremony to the Muggle world.” explained Dumbledore.

“Ugh. Two ceremonies. This is going to be horrible. Can Ginny come with me?” asked Harry.

Dumbledore smiled, “To the presentation at the Ministry, of course. To the private meeting with the Queen, yes. Whether or not she will be able to attend your presentation party is up to the Queen, but I doubt that she will have any problem with it.”

“So, did my Dad enjoy having to do all this?” asked Harry.

Dumbledore shook his head, “Sadly, your father never took the title of Lord Gryffindor. Your grandfather held the title until his death, and by that time your parents were already in hiding in Godric’s Hollow. He did, however, always protest that he hated royal functions that he attended with his father. He didn’t much care for Muggle formalities, or their suits for that matter. Speaking of, we will have to get you something suitable to wear to meet the Queen, Harry. The two of us will go shopping in Muggle London after the ceremony at the Ministry.”

Harry responded immediately, “Ginny will have to go shopping with us. We’ll need a woman’s taste. Not to mention she will need one of those elegant dresses that Muggle women wear to parties.”

Dumbledore nodded, “That will be fine. I have to leave now, but I will see you the day after tomorrow.” Dumbledore stood up and Apparated away.

Harry turned to Ginny after Dumbledore left and said, “You do realize that this means you will one day be Lady Gryffindor.”

Ginny smiled and curtsied, “Yes, Lord Gryffindor, I realize that, perfectly. Now about this dress..”

Harry cut her off, “We’ll discuss that the day after tomorrow. You can go over dress ideas with Hermione until then. I’m sure she will have some ideas. I don’t want to hear about them until I can actually see the dresses, though. I have to have something to look at when it comes to fashion.”

Ginny made a funny face, “Oh, alright. I’ll talk to Hermione. Let’s go get some dinner. I’m starting to get a little hungry.”

Harry reached out and took her hand, “So am I.” He pulled Ginny into a kiss. Harry stepped back from her and winked. Then, they appeared in the kitchen of Grimmauld Place still staring into each other’s eyes.

As soon as they appeared, Molly asked, “So, what did Dumbledore want with you?” Although Molly already knew, she was curious to see if Harry would talk about it.

Harry laughed, “He just informed me that I’m a whole lot richer than I thought. Not to mention that your daughter is the future Lady Gryffindor.”

Ron walked into the kitchen, followed closely by Hermione, “Who’s Lady Gryffindor?”

Ginny snorted, “Nobody right now, Ron, but I will be someday.”

Ron appeared confused, but Hermione understood immediately, “Harry, I didn’t expect you to have a title.”

Harry sighed, “There’s a whole lot more to it than that. I am a member of the royal family, and my Muggle fortune is quite a bit larger than my wizarding fortune.”

Ron gaped and then asked, “How much bigger?”

Molly snapped out, “Ronald Weasley, you do not ask people how much money they have.”

Ron blushed, "Sorry, Mum. It was a reflex action."

Harry shook his head, "Don't worry about it. I was a little surprised myself. To answer your question, about a dozen times over."

Even Hermione and Molly stared at Harry incredulously at this revelation. Harry turned to Molly Weasley, "The first order of business once I get my hands on the money will be to commission someone to rebuild the Burrow."

Molly shook her head, "No, Harry, we couldn't accept something like that from you. It wouldn't be proper."

"You most certainly can, considering the fact that the Burrow was destroyed because they thought that I might be there. So, Molly, you have two choices. One, you can smile and say thank you. Two, you can say no, and I'm going to do it anyway. Your choice." stated Harry.

Molly grabbed Harry in a hug, "Thank you so much, Lord Gryffindor."

Once Molly released him, Harry pointed a finger at her, "No offense, Molly, but if you ever call me Lord Gryffindor in a non-formal atmosphere again, I will have to hex you. Only Ginny gets to tease me about being a Lord. The rest of you have to find something else."

Ron protested, "Why does Ginny get to tease you and we don't?"

Harry chuckled, "Because I can fight back against Ginny. I can tease her about being a Lady."

Ginny smirked, "You had better watch what you say, Potter. I might decide that I don't want to be a Lady."

Ron snorted, "Ginny, even I know that's an empty threat. Harry couldn't get rid of you if he transported you to the moon."

Hermione and Ginny both slapped Ron on the arms at the same time. Harry and Molly laughed at him. Harry asked, "Why would I ever want to get rid of the beautiful Lady Gryffindor?"

Ginny laughed, "Okay, I think that's enough for today."

Harry nodded, "I suppose you're right. I think that you and Hermione need to discuss dresses anyway. I'm sure she will have some ideas. I doubt that Albus and I will be a lot of help when it comes to picking out evening dresses for meeting the Queen."

Hermione gasped, "You get to meet the Queen?"

"Considering she's my cousin, I would assume so. I'm supposed to be at the palace to meet her, and allow her advisors to plan my presentation party or something in three days." said Harry.

"That doesn't leave us much time. Come on, Ginny. I have some books that depict some dresses for formal wear. That should give us an idea of what to look for." said Hermione as she grabbed Ginny's arm and dragged her up the stairs.

Ron watched them go with his mouth hanging open. He finally recovered and said, "Don't they know that we're about to eat?"

Fred and George Apparated into the kitchen at that moment. Fred asked, "Who is ickle Ronniekins talking about?"

Harry grinned, "The girls. They just took off upstairs to look at evening dresses."

George frowned, "Why would they be looking for evening dresses?"

"Ginny and I are going shopping with Dumbledore, day after tomorrow to get an evening dress for Ginny and some kind of suit for me. We have to be suitably dressed for our audience with the Queen." explained Harry.

Fred and George nodded, and then did a double-take, "What do you mean, the Queen?"

"My cousin. Ginny and I are going to meet her two days after my birthday." said Harry.

Fred asked weakly, "Your cousin?"

George asked just as weakly, "You're royalty?"

Harry nodded, "Apparently."

Fred and George recovered from their shock, and then grinned mischievously. Harry groaned as he recognized the expressions on their face. Fred asked, "So, if you're royalty, and our sister is going to marry you.."

Fred trailed off and George completed it, "Does that mean that our little Gin-Gin is going to be royalty too?"

Harry nodded, "Yes, it does."

Fred and George grinned from ear to ear, "Yay. We've got a royal sister. We must treat her like royalty."

Molly Weasley broke in, "Oh, no you don't. You leave your sister alone."

Fred and George gave their best expressions of innocence. Harry laughed inwardly. In his experience, the more innocent Fred and George tried to appear, the more devious the scheme that they were up to. Molly eyed them, but did not inquire any further into what they were planning.

Ginny and Hermione returned downstairs just as Molly was preparing to serve dinner. Both of them looked rather giggly. Harry leaned in towards Ginny as she sat down beside him. He whispered, "I would watch myself around Fred and George if I were you. They're up to something."

Ginny glanced at the twins and saw them whispering quietly to one another. That was a bad sign as far as she was concerned. Nothing good ever came from those two when they felt they had to conceal what they were talking about from their Mother. This was going to be bad, very bad. Harry grasped her hand under the table and gave it a reassuring squeeze. She garnered some amount of courage from this. She glanced sideways at Harry's profile. He caught her and winked.

The twins finally stopped whispering to each other, and looked over at Ginny. Ginny took a deep breath, "So, what are the two of you up to?"

Fred grinned mischievously, while George echoed, "Up to?"

Ginny nodded, "Yeah, up to. I know its something, so you might as well spit it out and get it over with."

"Well, sis, we just wanted to congratulate you on finally becoming a Lady." said Fred.

George jumped in, "It was a complete surprise to us. Here, we thought all this time that you liked Harry because Dad used to read you bedtime stories about him."

Fred continued, "Now, we find out that you must be one of Trelawney's pupils, because you must have seen into the future and knew that Harry was a member of the royal family."

George took it up from here, "Because we all know how you used to walk around and talk about how much you wanted to be a Lady when you were a little girl."

Even Molly was finding it difficult not to laugh at the antics of the twins. Hermione was attempting to suppress her giggles, but was failing miserably. Ron was rolling on the floor chortling. Ginny was blushing every shade of scarlet imaginable.

Harry asked in utter disbelief, "They read you bedtime stories about me?"

Ginny could only nod in embarrassment, but the twins would have no mercy. Fred laughed, "You should have seen it, Harry. She used to beg Dad to read her the story of how the Boy-Who-Lived triumphed over He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named."

George said, "It was her favorite story. She heard it so many times that I bet that she could recite it word for word by the time she was five."

Harry stared at Ginny in open-mouthed astonishment. Fred finished, "I wish you could have been there to see it."

Harry grinned mischievously, "Maybe I should go back and see."

Ginny jerked her head up sharply, "You wouldn't."

"Wouldn't I?" challenged Harry.

Ron looked up from the floor, "What are the two of you talking about?"

Hermione answered since Harry and Ginny were still staring challengingly at each other, "He means that he can travel back in time to see for himself." She turned to Harry, "That would be really dangerous, Harry. You could alter time."

Harry snorted, while never taking his eyes from Ginny, "I wouldn't change anything, Hermione. I'm not stupid. All I would do is go back and take a peek. I would be invisible the whole time. No one would even know that I was ever there."

Ginny started to cry, "I can't believe that you're teasing me about this, too."

Harry pulled Ginny to him, and planted a kiss on her lips that stopped her tearing immediately. "I wasn't teasing you. If you have liked me from the first time that you heard about me, then, I would say that I am the luckiest man in the world, because we were obviously destined to be together."

The rest of the room had stopped in shock when Harry kissed Ginny. Hermione beamed when Harry finished speaking. Molly was wiping tears from her eyes as she viewed her daughter and Harry. Fred and George laughed, while Ron scowled.

Hermione caught the look on Ron's face, "What's the matter with you?"

Ron shook his head, "It's not fair."

Hermione appeared bewildered as did the rest of the room, "What's not fair?"

Ron pointed at Harry, "How come he can say stuff like that and I can't?"

Harry said, "You can say stuff like that anytime you want."

Ron shook his head, "No, I can't. It never comes out right when I try to say stuff like that to Hermione."

Harry chuckled, "That's because you keep letting your head get in the way."

Ron scratched his head in thought, "What does that mean?"

"If you want to be able to talk to Hermione the way I do to Ginny, you have to learn to listen to your heart. The language of the heart will never send you down the wrong path." explained Harry.

Ron shrugged, "I still don't get it."

Harry grinned, "You will. Now, let's eat."

Fred ran over to the other side of the table where Harry and Ginny were. "Milady, allow me to pull out your seat for you."

Harry gave a fake cough to catch Fred's attention, "I think that is enough teasing."

George protested, "No, we were just beginning to have fun."

Harry looked George square in the eye, "Might I remind the two of you that Voldemort is scared of me, and that I'm saying that is enough."

Fred and George exchanged quick glances and then chorused, "You're absolutely right, Harry. That is enough."

Both of them quickly took their seats and began to eat their dinner. Molly looked at Harry, "How do you get those two to behave? I have to scream for days to accomplish anything."

Harry grinned, "That's basically the problem. They're adults now, and they know that you can't really do anything to them, but yell."

"I could throw them out of the house." said Molly.

Harry shook his head, "That's not much of a threat considering we're in my house. Not to mention as much money as those two jokers make from that shop, they could get their own apartment. They just stay here because its convenient for the Order."

"Well, what could you do to them?" asked Molly.

Harry grinned, "They know that I have no reservations about beating them within an inch of their lives, because I can heal them as soon as I do it."

Molly sucked in a large breath, "Oh."

Harry patted her on the wrist, "Don't worry. They would have to go really overboard before I would hurt them. They're not that stupid, so the threat is enough to keep them in line."

Dinner continued as other members of the family came in. Once dinner was over, Harry and the others made their way upstairs to chat and work on some of their summer homework before going to bed.

The next morning, all the Weasleys Flooed over to Potter Manor for Harry's birthday party. Molly baked a huge cake, and had a lot of sandwiches made up for lunch.

Harry stretched as he looked out onto the pitch. Ron walked up beside him, and Harry grinned, "I guess that I had better go get our players. Seamus, Luna, and Neville are coming by Floo. I've got to go get Dean and the Creeveys."

Ron slapped him on the back, "We'll be waiting for you, mate."

Harry Apparated to Dean's house first. Dean, along with his mother and father were sitting in the den waiting for him. Dean asked excitedly, "So, are we going by Portkey?"

Harry shook his head, "No, just put a hand on my shoulders. I'll Apparate us all to the Manor, and then I have to go get Colin and Dennis." Each of the three of them placed a hand on Harry's shoulder. They Apparated back to the manor. Harry quickly introduced Dean's parents to Arthur and Molly. Then, he Disapparated away. A moment later, Harry appeared in the Creevey's sitting room. Their mother gave a start of surprise when Harry appeared. Harry smiled at her, "I told you."

She smiled, "Yes, you did. Will Colin and Dennis be able to do that someday?"

Harry nodded, "Colin will probably be able to do it next year. It will be a few years for Dennis, though."

Dennis and Colin bounded into the room, holding their broomsticks. They each grabbed one of Harry's arms. Dennis said impatiently, "Come on , Harry, we want to play."

Harry grinned, "That's the spirit. Hang on." The three of them Apparated to Potter Manor, and walked outside to the pitch. The group moved outside towards the pitch and surrounded the table that the sandwiches and drinks were piled on. Harry waited until everyone had eaten their fill. "Alright, we have to figure out how we're going to divide up the teams."

Hermione spoke up, "I think that the best way for you to do it, would be to decide who is going to play each position and then divide from there."

Harry looked over at the others, "That make sense to everyone?" They all nodded. "Okay, if you're going to play chaser, stand here." Harry pointed to one end of the pitch. "Dean, Seamus, Fred, and George are going to be the Beaters. Ron, and who's going to be the other Keeper?"

Bill answered, "I will."

Harry nodded, "I guess that leaves me and Charlie as the Seekers."

Charlie grinned, "I have been waiting for this day."

“Why?” asked Harry.

Charlie chuckled, “I finally get to go up against one of the legendary Potter Seekers in a game of Quidditch.”

Harry grinned, “You may regret that at the end of the day.” Harry looked over to find Ginny, Luna, Neville, Dennis, and Colin standing at the Chaser spot. “Hermione, you’ll have to play Chaser. So, go ahead and get over here.”

Hermione shook her head, “I’m not going to play Quidditch.”

“You have to. We need a fourteenth player.” whined Harry.

Hermione continued to shake her head, “You should have gotten someone else.”

Ron berated Hermione, “You mean to tell me that you are going to leave one of your best friends hanging on his birthday, after he saved your life from a fully grown mountain troll by sticking his wand up its nose.”

Everyone laughed about the incident in the trio’s first year at school. Hermione eyed Ron, “As I recall, you had a hand in saving my life too.”

Harry shook his head, “No, Ron saved my life after I got into trouble saving yours. The troll could have cared less about you after I jumped on it. It was trying to knock my head off when Ron took its club with that flying charm.”

Ron laughed, “Good point, mate. I had never really thought about it that way.”

Hermione tried one last trump card, “I don’t have a broom.”

Harry grinned and said, “Accio broomsticks.” Three brooms flew over to Harry. He presented one of them to Hermione, one to Neville, and one to Luna.

Hermione asked, “Where did you get these, Harry?”

Harry smiled, “You, Hermione, are holding my mother’s broomstick. Neville, you have my father’s, and Luna is holding Sirius’.”

Hermione gasped, “You would let me ride your mother’s broomstick.”

Harry smiled, “I can’t think of three better people to ride them, than three people that followed me into the Department of Mysteries that night. It’s time to choose teams. I’m ready to play. Charlie, since the two of us are the Seekers, I think that we should choose the teams. You go first. Pick someone from one position, and I’ll match it.”

Charlie nodded, “I’ll take Ron as my Keeper.”

“That leaves me with Bill. Your turn.”

“I’ll take Fred as a Beater.” said Charlie.

Harry paused for a moment, “Well, Fred and George are used to playing together, as are Dean and Seamus. It would be a shame to break up the dream teams. So, you take the twins, and I’ll take Dean and Seamus.”

“Fair enough. For my first chaser, I will take the blond. Colin, isn’t it?”

Colin nodded, as Harry smiled, “I think that it’s obvious who my first choice is going to be among the Chasers.”

Charlie laughed, “I figured that you would hex me if I bothered to try and pick her. Since we seem to be matching couples here, I’ll take Hermione. Ron would kill me if I didn’t pick her.”

Harry laughed, “Well, then, if we’re keeping the couples together, then I have to take Neville and Luna. That gives you the other Creevey brother as your final Chaser.”

Charlie shook Harry’s hand. “That makes the teams.”

Harry walked back over to his team, “Strategy session. Frank, would you be so kind as to release the balls once we’re in the air.”

Frank nodded, “It would be my pleasure, Harry.”

The adults began talking as they waited for the game to begin. Harry looked at his team as they gathered around him. “If I know Charlie, then he’s telling Fred and George to keep the pressure on you in goal, Bill. Hermione has never really played, so you don’t have to worry about too much from her, but those Creeveys are monsters with the Quaffle. Sometimes I wonder if the two of them share the same brain, like the twins. Neville, Luna, I want the two of you to follow Ginny’s lead. Back her up as best as you can. Dean, Seamus, do everything that you can to keep the Bludgers off of Bill when the Creevey get near the scoring area. Fred and George can be a bit brutal. They have a slight advantage on skill and experience, considering they have six championship team Gryffindors on their side. I’m going to beat Charlie to that Snitch, though. Just try to hang with them. We can do it. Remember something else, we’re here to have fun. We’re not playing Slytherin.”

Harry took to the air and his team followed him. Charlie’s team flew up from the other side and they all surrounded the center ring. Frank released the Snitch and the Bludgers. A moment later, he threw the Quaffle up into the air and the match began. Ginny took the Quaffle and drove straight for Ron so fast on her Nimbus 2100, that none of the other Chasers could begin to match the maneuver. She went into the scoring zone one on one with Ron, and put the Quaffle past him. Harry’s team was up by ten.

Play continued for about an hour after that. Charlie’s team was leading 120-40. Ginny had put in three of the goals. Surprisingly, Neville had gotten the other one past Ron. On the other side, the Creeveys were flying as if possessed. Hermione had managed one goal. Harry finally saw the Snitch. Charlie saw it at approximately the same time. Unfortunately for Harry, Charlie was much closer to it. Harry flattened himself to the Firebolt and raced after the Snitch.

Frank whistled appreciatively, “That boy can fly better even than his father.”

Arthur smiled, “Tell me about it. That’s not the half of what he can do. I am going to be very proud to have him as a son-in-law.”

Alice giggled from next to Molly, “You talk like you already know that he’s going to marry Virginia.”

Molly nodded, “We do know. They talk about it all the time. They have already planned out the fact that he is going to propose to her as the end of this year after he takes his N.E.W.T.’s. They are going to get married as soon as she finishes hers.”

Alice sighed, “Young love. It was nice.”

Frank smiled, “It still is.”

While this conversation was continuing, Harry had pulled up beside Charlie, looped him, and dove sideways off his broom to catch the Snitch. He fell through the air, and did a flip as his broom came rocketing down under him to catch him. He straightened up holding the Snitch as all the adults clapped.

The teams landed, Charlie clapped a hand on Harry’s shoulder, “I have never seen anything like that, Harry. That was the best catch that I have ever seen.” Ginny came running over and smacked Harry in the arm.

“Ouch!” he said as he rubbed his arm. “What did you hit me for?”

Ginny raged, “You scared me half to death when you jumped off your broom like that. You could have killed yourself.”

Harry smiled, “Don’t be silly, Ginny. I have fell from a lot higher than that before, and was fine. Besides, I knew what I was doing. I was in control of the Broomstick the whole time, and even if I hadn’t been I could have cast a Cushioning Charm on the ground long before I ever hit it.”

Ginny sighed, “I guess. Just don’t worry me like that anymore.”

Harry grinned ruefully, "I'll try my best." Once the rest of the players were sure that Ginny had calmed down, they began to congratulate Harry on his catch.

Fred and George chorused, "That was brilliant, mate."

Ron looked at Harry in awe, "That was amazing, Harry. I just wish that Wood had been here to see it. He would have went mad."

Bill was grinning from ear to ear, "I'm proud to know that you're going to join our family."

Harry laughed, "I joined your family a long time ago, Bill."

Bill nodded, "I know. I was just telling you that I approved of you marrying my sister is all."

Harry smiled and shook Bill's hand, "Thanks. I appreciate that."

5. Presented Title of Gryffindor

The next morning, Harry and Ginny sat down at breakfast. Harry appeared to be nervous, so Ginny smiled across at him. "I'm sure it will be okay."

Harry snorted, "I somehow doubt it. Knowing Fudge, he will make some huge deal out of this. He likes to be pompous, and this is a perfect occasion."

Hermione and Ron walked in. Ron grinned, "You'll live, mate."

Harry looked at the other two, as Fred and George joined them. "What are the two of you going to do today, while I am being tortured?"

Hermione grinned, "Didn't anyone tell you? We're coming to watch."

Ron laughed, "You should have known that we wouldn't miss something like this."

Harry turned to Fred and George, "I suppose this means that the two of you are coming, as well."

Fred and George nodded exuberantly, "We wouldn't miss it for the world. We even closed the shop for the morning."

Harry shook his head in resignation, "I just hope there isn't a big crowd for this."

Fred and George exchanged glances, "You're not going to get your wish, mate. Fudge had some of his aides place flyers all over Diagon Alley, yesterday."

Harry paled, "You have got to be kidding me."

Arthur said, "I'm afraid not, Harry. I tried to talk him out of it, but he wouldn't listen."

Harry looked up to see Arthur standing in the doorway of the kitchen with Lupin. Harry sighed, "I guess that I will just have to deal with it. Are you coming too, Remus?"

Remus smiled, "I wouldn't miss this for the world."

All of them finished eating breakfast hurriedly. The girls departed first to go and get ready. Harry looked over at Ron, "I guess that we might as well put on our dress robes."

Ron replied, "Yeah, I guess so."

The two of them walked up the stairs. Harry stopped and knocked on the door to Ginny's room. She called out, "Who is it?"

"It's Harry."

"I'm dressing."

"I know. I just wanted to tell you to lay out some Muggle clothing on your bed. That way I can change our clothing after the ceremony, so that we can go straight into London to shop with Dumbledore."

"Okay, I will."

"I love you."

"I know."

Ron shook his head and chuckled at the bemused expression on Harry's face. Harry turned to look at him, "How do you like that? I can't even get her to tell me that she loves me."

Ron slapped him on the back, "You know that she does."

Harry nodded, "I do. Let's just get ready."

Harry and Ron showered and pulled on their clothing. Then, they put their dress robes on, and walked downstairs. When they walked back into the sitting room, they discovered that Dumbledore was already there waiting for them. Harry smiled, "Hello, Albus."

Dumbledore smiled back at him, “Are you ready to become Lord Gryffindor, Harry?”

Harry shrugged, “I’m as ready as I’ll ever be, I guess. I hate crowds.”

“I know, Harry, but with your station in life comes certain obligations. You’ll just have to make the best of it.” said Dumbledore.

“At least when I get into the Muggle world, they won’t be ogling me because I’m the Boy-Who-Lived.”

“True. They will just be ogling you because you’re rich.” replied Dumbledore.

Harry shrugged, “It could be worse.”

“I don’t think that its that bad.” Harry heard Ginny’s voice come from behind him.

He turned around, and sucked in a breath. Ginny was dressed in the robes that Harry had gotten her for the Ball the previous year. She was also wearing the bracelet and necklace that he had given her for Christmas. All in all, she was a breathtaking sight to behold. “You are exquisite.” said Harry.

Ginny smiled, and curtsied, “You are very gracious, Lord Gryffindor. I must say that you don’t look so bad yourself.”

Dumbledore laughed softly at the playful teasing that Ginny was subjecting Harry to. “Young love. It is a wonderful thing to behold.”

Ginny flushed slightly, but Harry answered the statement with one of his own, “It may be nice to behold, but I would much rather experience it. There is nothing that can remotely compare to it.”

“I would have to agree with you, Harry.” said Dumbledore wistfully.

Harry eyed Dumbledore in surprise at his tone of voice. He refrained from comment, but decided to try and find out about it later. “Albus, I was thinking. Dobby would probably love to be there today when I am formally presented the title of Lord Gryffindor. If you don’t mind him leaving for the day. I would like for him to be there. I’m sure it would mean a lot if I asked him to come.”

Dumbledore nodded, “I am sure that Dobby would enjoy it very much. I can send a message to Hogwarts if you would like.”

Harry shook his head, “No need. I’ll go get him.”

Harry quickly transformed into a phoenix, and then disappeared. He reappeared in the kitchen of Hogwarts. He transformed back into his human form and quickly spotted Dobby racing towards him. “Harry Potter, sir. Harry Potter.” Dobby grabbed Harry in a hug.

Harry smiled and patted Dobby on the back. “Dobby, I came to ask you if you wanted to come to my presentation ceremony at the Ministry, today?”

Dobby beamed up at Harry, “Is Harry Potter serious, sir? Dobby would love to come, and see Harry Potter become Lord Gryffindor. Dobby is honored for Harry Potter is a great and noble wizard.”

Harry waved a hand to stem the flow of words from Dobby’s mouth, “A simple yes would do fine. Now, we have to do something about those clothes. You need to wear something a little more formal.” Harry waved a hand at Dobby, and his tea cozy, sweater, and shorts were transfigured into an open vest of fine silk and elf size black trousers.

Dobby looked down at his clothes in amazement, “Harry Potter is too kind. Harry Potter is the greatest wizard of all.”

“Enough, Dobby. Let’s go. Just follow my magical signature, and you will turn up in my house.”

Harry transformed back into a phoenix, and popped to Grimmauld Place. Dobby Apparated following him.

They both appeared in the sitting room with the others. Harry reverted to his human form. Dumbledore eyed him thoughtfully, “Harry, how did you bring Dobby here?”

“What do you mean?” asked Harry.

“He shouldn’t have been able to come into the house because of the Fidelius Charm.” said Dumbledore.

“Oh, that was easy. Since you are the Secret Keeper for the Order, I pulled the information directly from your brain to his. It was the same thing as if you told him yourself. A simple charm really. Unfortunately nobody even knows that it exists.”

“Then, where did you learn it?” asked Hermione, who by this point had joined everyone else in the sitting room.

Harry smiled mysteriously, “I don’t believe that is information that I can readily give out. I have to have a few secrets.”

Hermione started to protest, but Ron placed a hand on her mouth. “Let’s not go through that, again, Mione. If Harry doesn’t want to tell us, I’m sure he has a reason. Let it go at that.”

Everyone in the room stared at Ron in surprise. Molly was the first one to speak, “Ronald Weasley, I am impressed. You’re finally growing up.”

The twins couldn’t resist the opportunity for a quick jab at Ron, “Aww, our little Ronniekins is finally growing up.” Both of them pretended to wipe a stray tear from the corner of their eye. They both then gave very loud and very fake sniffs and said together, “I’m going to miss ickle Ronniekins sticking his foot in his mouth.”

Hermione responded scathingly, “Ron may be immature some of the time, but the two of you are immature all of the time.”

Fred grinned, “Hey, the two of us resemble that remark.” Everyone in the room laughed.

Harry said, “Molly, at least we know that no matter what happens, the twins will always be good at cheering everyone up.”

Molly nodded, “At least they’re good at something.”

Dumbledore finished chuckling, “Well, we should be getting along. The Minister will not want the guest of honor to be late.”

Harry snorted, “I’m all for disappointing the Minister. Who’s with me?”

Ginny grabbed him by the arm and said while smiling, “No, Lord Gryffindor. You are going to go, and be on time. I want pictures of this.”

Harry spun on her in horror, “You’re going to take pictures?”

“Of course, silly. What did you think we were going to do? Sit around and try to remember everything that happened. We have to commemorate this.” said Ginny giggling.

Harry shook his head emphatically, “No, we don’t. We don’t even have to remember this day. We can just pretend that it didn’t happen after its over.”

All the Weasleys shook their head, “No. We are all going to remember this day for a long time.” said Molly.

Harry sighed, “As long as I don’t have to be here when you pull out the album and look at all the pictures.”

Ginny nodded, “Agreed. Now, let’s go.”

“Alright, lead the way.”

Dumbledore pulled out a flat piece of metal, “I have a Portkey to take us to the Ministry. That way we don’t have to bother with the Floo. Harry, while we are at the Ministry today, it wouldn’t hurt for you to make an appointment to take your Apparation test.”

Harry nodded his head, "Yeah, I hadn't thought about that. I'll do it after the ceremony is over." Everyone in the group gathered around the Portkey and placed a finger on it. Dumbledore tapped it with his wand, and the group was whisked away to the Ministry.

As soon as they appeared, Davis Weatherby hurried over to them. "Harry, you're not going to like this. Fudge has the entire press core waiting outside. They are going to have pictures of this flying all over the world before the day is out."

Harry shrugged, "I knew that this was going to be a nightmare as soon as I found out that Fudge was in charge of the ceremony. Let's go ahead and get out there. The sooner that we get started, the sooner that it is over with."

Davis smiled sympathetically, "I understand. If you will follow me, I will lead you onto the stage. The rest of you can go through that door over there and take seats in the front that are reserved for friends and family."

Albus nodded, "Thank you, Davis. Good luck, Harry." The rest of the group echoed Dumbledore as they filed out the door.

Davis looked at Harry expectantly, "Are you ready?"

Harry took a deep breath, "As I'll ever be."

The two of them walked out onto the stage. The crowd of people that were in the auditorium was staggering in size. Harry hadn't seen this many witches and wizards grouped together since the World Cup. Harry took his seat next to Amelia Bones. She smiled at him reassuringly and then immediately took on her customary stern expression. Harry grinned weakly in reply and then looked straight ahead. Fudge stood up and walked over to the podium. "May I have your attention, please?" The crowd immediately quieted. Fudge smiled, "We are here today to present the title of Lord Gryffindor to one of the most famous wizards of all time. This title has not been held since the demise of William James Potter sixteen years ago. I am proud to present this title to the last remaining Potter, and the final surviving member of the line of Godric Gryffindor. I give you, Harry Potter."

The crowd cheered. Harry heard calls of, "You go, Potter." to "I love you, Harry." to "Will you marry me?" Harry looked down to the front rows to see Ginny's eyes flashing in anger at the catcalls he was receiving from the girls. Harry smiled to himself as he took his place in front of the podium. Fudge shook his hand to thunderous applause. Several cameras flashed to commemorate the moment.

Harry began his speech, "I would like to thank all of you that have come here today. I want everyone to know that I am honored to finally take my grandfather's title. It is a great honor to know that I am descended from Godric Gryffindor as well. I fear that I am not great at speechmaking, so I will end by thanking all my friends and family for standing beside me through all the trials of my life."

One of the reporters yelled out, "Would you answer a few questions, Lord Gryffindor?"

Harry chuckled to himself, "I would prefer to be addressed as Harry or Mr. Potter. I don't think that a great deal of formality is really necessary. Yes, I will answer a few questions, and since you were so bold you may have the first."

The reporter grinned, "I am Pierce Bieterman from the Daily Prophet. I would like to know how you feel about the war with You-Know-Who and its progress thus far?"

Harry frowned, "I will only answer questions concerning Voldemort if the reporter to ask the question is capable of saying his name." The crowd flinched and fell deathly quiet as Harry spoke the name.

Pierce cleared his throat, "Mr. Potter, I fear that is difficult to say the name of the Dark Lord."

"Why?" challenged Harry.

The reporters all appeared to be bewildered by this statement. A young looking witch said, "I'm Laura Madley from Witch Weekly. I think that I can answer your question. We feel that if we speak his name, then we will incur his wrath."

Harry laughed, "I suppose that is a logical assumption. I don't think that it is very valid. If you want to incur his wrath, then you have to call him Tom to his face. He hates that."

Davis, Albus, and Ginny laughed heartily at Harry's joke. The rest of the crowd merely stared at Harry in horror. Laura Madley raised her hand, "Mr. Potter, why would calling He-Who-Must-Not-Be Named Tom infuriate him."

Harry replied, "I have already told you that you must call him by his proper name if you would like me to answer questions concerning Voldemort." The crowd shuddered as Harry said his name again.

The first reporter tried again, "How do you feel about the progress of the war with V..V..V...Voldemort?" The reporter panted as though he had been running.

Harry smiled, "I think that the war has been progressing rather well. I hope for it to be over within another year."

"Isn't that a little optimistic?" asked Pierce.

Harry shrugged, "Perhaps. We will just have to wait and see."

Rita Skeeter popped out, "So, Harry, who is your current love interest?"

Harry eyed her, "Rita, I don't believe that is any of your business. However, I am going to answer you anyway. Everyone should know that I am dating the youngest and only daughter of Arthur Weasley. However, if any of you dare to bother her with questions about our relationship, I promise that you will suffer my displeasure, and considering the fact that even your vaunted Lord Voldemort ran cowering in fear the last time that he faced me in combat, I would not recommend that." Harry's eyes flashed, and he drew power to him. The room literally appeared to crackle with energy. Several of the members of the crowd gazed around in fear. Harry relaxed and the atmosphere of the room returned to normal. "If any of you are wondering, that is merely a taste of my power. I trust that none of you want to see what I am capable of. Good day." Harry stepped back from the stage while many of the people that were present continued to look at each other in trepidation, and if truth be told a little fear.

Cornelius returned to the podium, "Thank you, Lord Gryffindor. We appreciate any future comments that you would like to make. I believe that concludes the presentation ceremony. I would like to thank all of you for being here today." The crowd began to file out of the room. Lupin, Dumbledore, and the Weasleys went through the side door to meet Harry as he came off the stage. Ron, Ginny, and the twins grinned at Harry broadly. Hermione sniffed disapprovingly.

Dumbledore, however, looked stern, "Harry, was that absolutely necessary?"

Harry nodded, "To put all of those reporters in their place, I believe that it was. I will not have my life constantly disrupted because of some two-bit reporter that is hell-bent on making a name for themselves at my expense. I just made sure that they understand what I am capable of if they bother me too much."

Dumbledore sighed, "I can assure you that none of them will be asking you anything for quite awhile after that display."

Harry grinned, "Then, I accomplished what I intended. I guess I need to go make an appointment to take my Apparation test. I'll be back in just a little bit." He turned to Ginny, "Do you want to come with me?"

She smiled broadly, "Of course. I would be honored to be seen on the arm of the magnificent Lord Gryffindor."

The rest of the group snorted, while Harry chuckled, "I don't know if I would say that I was magnificent. Wait, yes, I would. Let's go with that. I think that is what all of you should have to call me from now on, the magnificent Lord Gryffindor."

Ron gaped and then said, "Harry, mate, if you think that I am going to call you that, then you are outside your mind."

Harry nodded, "You're probably right. I am almost positive that I am outside my mind, or at least I have been at certain points of my life. We have to go into London later, so we need to hurry. Let's go, Ginny."

Dumbledore called after them, "I must speak with Cornelius for a moment, but I will meet you back here in a few minutes."

Harry waved over his shoulder to show that he had heard Dumbledore. Arthur shook his head as he looked at the others, "I don't know what we are going to do with that boy. He is getting to be completely unpredictable."

The twins bubbled, "Yeah, but it makes for a lot of fun."

Remus snorted, "Sometimes. The two of you could have fun in Snape's dungeon, though."

The twins shook their heads solemnly, "I don't think that we are quite that good. We've tried over the years to have fun in Snape's class, but it hasn't happened very often."

Molly shook her head, "Let's just go home."

A little while later, Harry and Ginny rejoined Dumbledore in the waiting area. Dumbledore looked at the two teenagers, "Are the two of you ready to head for Oxford Street?"

Ginny nodded enthusiastically, while Harry merely shrugged noncommittally. Ginny asked, "Don't we need to change into Muggle clothes?"

Harry turned to her, "Did you put out the clothes on your bed, like I asked you to this morning?"

She nodded. Harry snapped his fingers. The three of them were suddenly dressed differently. Ginny was clad in a light pink skirt with a cream blouse. Harry was wearing khaki slacks, and a bottle green button down shirt. Ginny glanced at Harry, who appeared to be having difficulty holding in his laughter. She looked around to see what was so funny, and took a look at Dumbledore's clothing. She stopped and attempted to hold in the laughter that was attempting to bubble up and out of her.

Dumbledore was dressed in a pair of very bright psychedelic shorts, and a bright Hawaiian shirt. He was also sporting a pair of mirrored sunglasses, and a very long brimmed baseball cap.

Dumbledore attempted to look at Harry sternly, but he could not contain his mirth either. First, his eyes began to twinkle, and then he began to laugh. Once, Dumbledore began to laugh, Harry and Ginny could contain themselves no longer. They both began laughing and did not stop until they heard someone say, "What the heck are you wearing, Albus?"

Harry wiped the tears of mirth from his face to look up and see Davis Weatherby. He grinned, "We were about to go into to Muggle London. Ginny and I put out clothes this morning, and I changed our clothes. I decided that I would transfigure Albus' robes at the same time."

Davis looked at Dumbledore, "Something tells me that you had nothing to do with choosing your apparel."

Dumbledore nodded, "Something tells me that you are right." Dumbledore waved his wand at his clothes, and changed into a pair of slacks and a button down shirt that were very similar to Harry's.

Ginny smiled, "You look nice, Professor."

Harry hid a smile behind his hand, "Stop sucking up to the Headmaster, Ginny. Let's go shopping."

The three of them bade Davis good-bye, and then left the Ministry and went out into Diagon Alley. They made their way through the crowds of people that were thronging about. Several people shot glances at Harry, but no one attempted to stop his progress until Dobby came running up to him. Dobby grabbed Harry by the arm, "Harry Potter, sir. Dobby wanted to thank Harry Potter for letting him come to watch today."

Several of the people in the surrounding crowd glanced at the excited house-elf in amusement. Harry laughed, "It's okay, Dobby. I'm glad that you were here."

"So, Potter, I see that you have taken up with my cast-offs." came a familiar drawl.

Harry looked around to see Draco Malfoy standing a few feet away, "Malfoy. Dobby isn't your cast off. I freed him from your family because you weren't good enough for him." Draco took a step forward, and Harry smiled as Dobby raised his hands. "You know, Malfoy, I don't think that making threatening gestures towards me would be advisable. Dobby sent your father flying down a set of stairs when he tried to attack me."

Malfoy sneered, "I'm not afraid of a pathetic house-elf."

Harry smiled condescendingly, "Perhaps not, but you wouldn't want to attack me and reveal your little secret now would you, Malfoy? Your father is already a fugitive on the run from the law. I don't think that Voldemort would be pleased if he lost his spy from within Hogwarts. You have to be careful."

Malfoy's eyes flashed with hatred. "I am going to kill you one day, Potter."

Harry yawned very deliberately and very intentionally, "I have heard that line from a lot of people, Malfoy. Most of them were far more powerful than you. So, you'll excuse me if I'm not worried. The fact remains that despite your master's best efforts, I am still here. Now, if you will excuse us, we have shopping to do."

Draco snarled, "One day we will meet without witnesses, Potter."

Harry smirked, "I'm sure that we will, Malfoy. However, from now on when we meet, you will address me by my proper title, Lord Gryffindor." Harry spun around, and grabbed Ginny by the hand. The two of them walked steadily away from Malfoy. Draco started to pull out his wand to curse Harry, but caught Dumbledore's eyes. Draco looked away, and then stalked off into the crowd. Dumbledore sighed, and then turned to follow Harry and Ginny into the Leaky Cauldron.

The three of them made their way out through the Leaky Cauldron, and out the front door onto the Muggle street before Harry stopped, and turned towards Dumbledore. "Albus, I forgot to change over some Galleons for Muggle money."

Dumbledore grinned, "Don't worry. I did it for you." Dumbledore pulled out a stack of Muggle cash and handed it over to Harry.

Ginny stared at the money in amazement, "I don't think that I have ever seen that much Muggle money at one time."

Harry leaned over and kissed Ginny on the cheek. "Get used to it, Lady Gryffindor. You are going to be able to spend sums of money like this anytime that you want."

Ginny smiled, "I think that I could get used to this whole rich thing."

Harry nodded, "So can I." Harry offered Ginny his arm, and she took it. Dumbledore raised a hand to hail a cab. The three of them entered, and Harry leaned forward, "Oxford Street, please."

The cabbie nodded, and began driving away. Once they arrived, the cabbie turned around, "That will be 7 pounds."

Harry handed the cabbie a ten-pound note. "Keep the change."

Dumbledore led the way into a men's store. Harry asked, "Why are we getting my clothes, first?"

Dumbledore gave Harry a glance, "How many times have you been shopping for clothes with women?"

Harry shrugged, "Only once."

Dumbledore smiled, "It will take a great deal longer to get her a dress than it will you a suit. I expect that we would be too tired to get your clothes if we let her go first."

Ginny pursed her lips, "I'm not going to take that long."

Harry pointed at Dumbledore, "He does have a point. You will take longer than I will. As soon as we find something that fits, I'm good."

Ginny shook her head, "Oh no you are not. We are going to find something that looks good on you. It isn't everyday that you get to meet the Queen."

Harry shrugged, "Let's just get this over with."

A half an hour later, the three of them left the shop with Harry holding his new suit. The three of them walked across the street to a fashionable boutique for women.

Once they were inside, the salesclerk walked up to them. "May I help you?"

Dumbledore nodded, "Yes, we need to purchase an evening dress for the young lady. We need something with a high level of elegance."

The clerk smiled as she eyed Ginny. "I think that I have the perfect dress for her."

Ginny followed the clerk back towards the dressing rooms. She emerged some time later in an elegant green strapless gown. Harry took one look at it and shook his head. Ginny mouthed, "Thank you."

The clerk seemed surprised, "You don't like it?"

Harry said, "Don't get me wrong, it is a lovely dress. It just isn't Ginny."

The clerk nodded, "I understand. Let's try something else." The two women walked back into the dressing room again. The next time that they came out, Harry paused and sucked in a huge breath in surprise. Even Dumbledore seemed to sit up and take notice.

Ginny was in a red and gold mixture that left her shoulders bare, while wrapping around her neck. The back was bare to just above her waist, and then the dress hugged her hips and then flared out around her legs. She was wearing red high heels which gave her the appearance of being slightly taller. She smiled, "So, what do you think?"

Harry smiled, "I think that even though I have said it before that I need to repeat it. If there is a man on this earth that would not risk everything he had just to get a glimpse of you then he should be put to death for his stupidity. You are exquisite."

Ginny beamed, "I love you, Harry."

"And I you, Miss Weasley."

The clerk looked over at Dumbledore, "I take it that you want this dress."

Dumbledore nodded, "I think that would be an accurate assumption. You might as well ring it up."

Once Ginny had removed the dress, and walked up to the counter with Harry for him to pay for it, she almost gasped in surprise. The dress cost five hundred pounds. While Ginny was not for sure what the exact exchange rate between the Muggle pound and a Galleon was, she knew that this was a more money than most of her wardrobe cost.

Ginny took the dress box from the clerk, and then followed Harry and Dumbledore back out onto the street in a daze. Harry looked over at her and asked, "Are you alright, Gin?"

She smiled, "I have never been better, Harry Potter." She continued to smile dazedly.

Harry and Dumbledore exchanged glances. Harry shrugged in confusion, while Dumbledore smiled in understanding. They took a cab, back to the Leaky Cauldron, where Ginny and Harry took the Floo back to Grimmauld Place, and Dumbledore Apparated away.

Molly and Hermione came running over as soon as Ginny and Harry appeared out of the fire in the kitchen. Molly smiled, "The two of you must be tired after such a long day, but we would like to see your outfits for tomorrow if you don't mind too much."

Harry smiled, "Sure, we can go change. See you in a bit."

Ginny followed Harry up the stairs without speaking. They split on the second floor. Harry went into his room, while Ginny went into hers. Harry came back out a few minutes later in his suit, and waited outside the door to Ginny's room. She joined him a few minutes later. Harry smiled, "You are absolutely stunning."

Ginny returned his smile, "Why thank you, Mr. Potter. You had better be careful. A girl could get used to this."

"You should get used to it. I am going to spend the rest of my life spoiling you rotten." said Harry.

Ginny laughed, "Too late. I'm already rotten."

Harry held out his arm, "Well, Milady, shall we go put on our fashion show?"

Ginny placed her hand on the inside of his elbow, "Lead the way, Lord Gryffindor." The two of them walked downstairs, and into the sitting room where everyone was waiting.

Hermione and Molly immediately went into transports of delight. They demanded that Harry and Ginny spin around and show them the backs of their outfit. Arthur, Ron, Bill, Lupin, and Charlie nodded in approval. Bill chuckled, "Ginny, you are going to knock the royal court dead on their feet. Harry, you need a cape to go with your suit."

Ginny nodded, "I agree. It will make you look more dashing."

Harry shrugged, "Whatever you all think is best. Its not like I have any taste."

Ginny slapped Harry on the shoulder, "Just what am I?"

"Pure luck on my part."

Ginny paused and scrunched up her face in thought, "I can live with that."

"I'm glad. If you couldn't, I might have had to go out and curse myself." said Harry. Everyone else laughed at Harry's attempt at dry humor.

A little later Harry and Ginny went back upstairs, and changed into more casual clothing. After they ate dinner, they each made an early night, knowing that the next day would be long.

The next morning after breakfast, Harry and Ginny changed into their dress clothes. By the time that they returned downstairs, Dumbledore had arrived. He smiled at them, "I have the Portkey that will take us to the chamber in the palace for wizard entrances. We will be escorted to the Queen's chambers. I will only be staying for a few moments. Then, I will leave the two of you to yourselves with the Queen. I'm sure that she will have many things to ask you, Harry. She was very good friends with your grandfather."

Harry nodded, "Let's go." All three of them touched the Portkey and Dumbledore tapped it with his wand. The three of them winked out of existence in Grimmauld Place, and reappeared in a small room. There was a man there that appeared to be a butler of some kind.

He bowed to them, "Headmaster Dumbledore, I greet you. Lord Gryffindor, I welcome you to the palace. If the three of you will follow me, I will take you to Her Majesty's chamber."

Harry, Ginny, and Dumbledore followed the man down the corridor to a large set of double doors. There were guards standing outside the door. The butler nodded to them, and then opened the doors. The three followed the butler into the room. He turned to them, "Have a seat, and make yourselves comfortable. Her Majesty will be with you in just a moment." He bowed to the three of them and then swept from the room.

The three of them had barely sat down in the chairs that were provided, when the side door of the chamber was opened and the Queen entered. All three of them quickly rose to their feet, and then bowed low. The Queen smiled, "You may rise." They stood up. "Sit. We will be casual at this meeting."

Dumbledore bowed from the waist, "You are most gracious, Your Majesty. I have escorted these two youngsters here as you requested. However, I must leave, and attend to business back at Hogwarts. I will leave these two in your care."

The Queen nodded, "You have my leave to go, Headmaster. I look forward to the next time we meet."

Dumbledore turned to Harry and Ginny, "I will see you back at headquarters later."

Harry nodded, "Thank you, Albus." Ginny merely smiled.

Once Dumbledore had walked out of the room the Queen turned her attention to Harry and Ginny, "I must formally welcome you to the palace, Lord Gryffindor. I would also like to inquire as to the identity of the lovely young lady that you have brought with you."

Harry smiled, "I would like to begin by thanking you for your invitation. As to the identity of this vision of perfection that is sitting beside me, her name is Ginny Weasley."

Ginny stood and curtsied to the Queen, "I am honored to be here, Your Majesty."

The Queen leaned forward slightly, "Now we must discuss your presentation party. I would like for the two of you to meet with the events coordinator for the palace."

Harry nodded, "Of course, Your Majesty. However, I would like to ask a question." The Queen motioned for him to continue. "I was wondering if I might invite guests of my own?"

The Queen nodded, "You may invite as many people as you wish. Just inform the events coordinator when you speak with her."

"Thank you, Your Majesty." Harry stood and bowed. Harry and Ginny were escorted back out of the chamber and down the hallway to meet with the events coordinator.

Ginny looked over at Harry while they were walking down the hallway, "Who are you wanting to invite?"

Harry grinned, "Well, Ron and Hermione, of course. Any of the rest of your family that wants to come. The Dursleys."

"Why would you want to invite the Dursleys?" asked Ginny.

Harry continued to grin, "Can you imagine the looks on their faces when they get invited to a royal function for Lord Gryffindor? They will be ecstatic. Then, imagine the looks on their faces when they find out that I am Lord Gryffindor. It will be priceless."

Ginny gave him a disapproving look that was reminiscent of Hermione, "Don't you think that is a little childish?"

Harry nodded, "I know, but it will be great. By the way, you do know that if you continue to make that face, your brother will begin to think that you are turning into his girlfriend."

Ginny smiled, and then laughed, "I know, but I figured that I had to at least pretend to be mature."

Harry chuckled as the butler led them into the office of the events coordinator. They talked with her for almost an hour, until she had taken down the information for everyone that was to be invited. Then, they completed planning the course of the party. Harry and Ginny left exhausted. Harry Apparated him and Ginny out of the palace and back to Grimmauld Place. Molly smiled at them as they appeared, "How was your visit with the Queen?"

Harry grunted, "Short."

Molly seemed confused, "You've been gone for quite awhile, though."

Ginny smiled, "We spent a lot longer planning the party with some woman than we did with the Queen."

Molly smiled, "I suppose that was interesting."

Harry shrugged, "If you want to call it that. I have a few other words that I would use to describe it. Boring, Aggravating, Annoying, Stupid. That should cover it for the time being."

Ginny and Molly laughed at him. Ginny said, "Harry, you're so silly."

Harry nodded, "I know, but right now I am going to go be silly upstairs. I am going to get out of this monkey suit and take a nap."

Molly nodded, "You do that, Harry. I'll call you when it is time for dinner." Harry nodded without bothering to answer as he turned to walk up the stairs.

A few days later, Petunia Dursley of Number Four Privet Drive was busy cleaning the kitchen floor, when the doorbell rang. She went to the door and opened it to find a mail courier waiting with an official looking envelope, and a clipboard. "Are you Mrs. Petunia Dursley?" he asked.

She nodded, "Yes, I am."

The man handed over the clipboard and a pen, "If you would sign here, ma'am. I have a delivery for you."

Petunia soundlessly signed the document on the clipboard and handed it back to the deliveryman. He handed her the envelope that he was holding, and tipped his hat to her. Petunia closed the door, and slit the envelope open with a letter opener from the desk in the entrance foyer. The envelope bore the royal seal, and the return address of the Palace. Petunia pulled the letter from within the envelope out. She unfolded it and began to read.

Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Dursley,

You are cordially invited to the royal presentation party of the newly ascended Lord Gryffindor. This party will take place on the fourteenth of August at seven o'clock, and will occur at the Palace. Your son is invited to come as well. Formal attire is required. If you intend to attend this function, you must return the enclosed acknowledgement no later than August the 11th. I look forward to seeing you at the party.

Jan Bridgeport

Petunia gasped in surprise. She immediately telephoned Vernon at work. He answered the phone in his usual gruff voice, "Yes?"

"Vernon, dear, we have received an invitation to a royal party." said Petunia quickly.

Vernon paused to let the information sink in, "What?"

Petunia repeated more slowly, "We have received an invitation to a royal party."

"Why?"

"I don't know, but it arrived by official messenger, and the envelope bears the royal seal." replied Petunia. "I would really like to go, Vernon."

Vernon considered for a moment, "I suppose. I might be able to make some business contacts with people that have that kind of money. When is it?"

"On the fourteenth." replied Petunia.

"Very well. Make arrangements for mine and Dudley's suits to be cleaned. I suppose that you will want a new dress for something like this. You can go shopping."

"Excellent. I will see to it immediately." Petunia was so excited that she hung up the phone without even saying good-bye.

The next week or so flew by for the Dursleys, as much as it seemed to crawl for Harry. The evening before the party, Harry was sitting with Ginny in the living room relaxing. Ginny smiled, "Just think in twenty-four hours, we will be attending a party at the palace."

Harry groaned, "Don't remind me. I don't even really want to have to think about it."

Ginny pouted, "I'm going to be there."

Harry grinned, "As far as I'm concerned, that is the only thing that is going to make the night remotely bearable. If I hadn't been able to bring you with me, I think that I would have skipped it."

Ginny shook her head, "You would have been made to go, anyway."

Harry looked at her and laughed, "Who exactly is going to make me go? I don't think that there is a Muggle or wizard in existence that could make me do anything."

"Sure there is."

"Who?"

"Me."

Harry paused and thought that one over for a minute, "Okay, I'll give you that one, but would you have really made me go if I couldn't take you with me?"

Ginny nodded, "Most definitely."

Harry sighed, "I just wish that some of the others would come."

Ginny laughed, "The only ones that really wanted to were the twins. Mum said that they couldn't go without proper supervision. Since no one else was going with us, that left them without a chaperone."

Harry laughed, "I don't know if the royal family could handle Fred and George."

"True. They would never be the same." said Ginny.

The next day passed by and it was time to leave for the palace before Harry knew it. Harry sighed, "Let's get this over with."

Ginny laughed at him, "It won't be that bad."

"We'll see." Harry took Ginny's hand and Apparated the two of them to the palace. The Dursleys were arriving at the guest entrance at approximately the same time. They were led in by the attendant to their seats in the hall that the party would take place in. Once everyone had arrived and been seated, a pair of trumpets sounded and the Queen made her entrance down the main stairway.

The herald announced her, "Presenting Her Majesty, the Queen."

She walked to the bottom of the stairs and waited for the herald to announce Harry. Ginny was waiting amongst the guests. The trumpets sounded again, and the herald called, "Presenting Lord Gryffindor."

Harry started at the top of the stairs, and slowly walked down. While he was doing this, Vernon leaned over to Petunia, "He seems familiar to me, somehow."

Ginny, who was sitting within earshot of the Dursleys, smiled to herself. Harry reached the bottom of the stairs, and he and the Queen began walking side by side up the aisle. Vernon and Petunia were watching Harry closely to try and determine who he was. Dudley figured it out first. He gasped out, "Mum, that's Harry."

Petunia and Vernon went slack-jawed in astonishment. Harry turned to smile at them when he heard Dudley's words. The Queen paused beside him, "Is there a problem, Lord Gryffindor?"

Harry smiled, "No, Your Majesty, my aunt, uncle, and cousin were merely expressing their surprise at seeing me."

The Queen looked at the Dursleys and said, "You must be very proud of your nephew." Then, she turned to Harry, "I presume that they are from your mother's side of the family."

Harry nodded, "Yes, Your Majesty. My Aunt Petunia here, was my mother's sister."

The Dursleys continued to stare at Harry as if he had three heads or something. The Queen and Harry continued to walk down the walkway to the front of the chamber. The herald walked down to the front. The Queen nodded to him. He called out, "Let the party commence."

Harry bowed to the Queen, and then turned to walk over to where Ginny was getting to her feet. Harry stopped in front of her and bowed again, "Milady, may I have the pleasure of the first dance?"

Ginny held out her hand, "You may have the first, the last, and every one in between."

Harry took her hand and swept Ginny out onto the dance floor where the band was just beginning to play. The two of them began to dance, and were soon joined by other people from the party. After a couple of songs, Harry and Ginny walked over to the side of the room where they were confronted by the Dursleys.

Vernon pointed a finger at Harry, "Why did you invite us here, boy?"

Harry smiled, "To let you see what could have been if you had just found it in your heart to treat me like a human being. However, since you didn't, this will be your only taste of a finer life. After tonight, know that I will never think of any of you, again. This is the final farewell. I hope you enjoy the rest of your lives, as I intend to enjoy mine." Harry turned to walk away.

Petunia stopped him, "How did you arrange all this, Harry?"

Harry turned back, "My title is Lord Gryffindor. That is how you are to address me. I didn't arrange this. The royal family felt that I needed a presentation party since I am now of age, and have formally accepted my title."

Dudley asked stupidly, "Does this mean that you are part of the royal family?"

Harry nodded, "Sort of. The Queen is my cousin. I am ninth in line for the throne."

Vernon gasped, "That means that you are rich."

Harry chuckled, "Yes, it does. Now, if you will excuse me, I believe that the dance floor is calling Ginny and me." Harry took Ginny's hand, and walked away from the Dursleys, never to see them again.

6. Diagon Alley

The morning after the party Harry and Ginny both slept late. By the time that they had gotten up, the Post owl had dropped off their Hogwarts's letters. It had also brought Ginny's O.W.L. scores. They had been late getting them out this year due to a mistake at the Ministry. With the disorder that Voldemort was causing this was no great surprise to anyone. Harry smiled at Ginny, "You might as well open them and see how you did."

Hermione was reading her letter with an almost frantic fascination. Finally, she jumped up and did a little dance holding a badge. Harry looked at Ginny and the two of them laughed. Ginny said, "I assume this means that you are Head Girl, Hermione."

Hermione nodded vigorously which sent her bushy hair flying all over the place, "Yes, I did it. I have wanted to be Head Girl since I first came to Hogwarts."

Ron snorted, "We know."

Harry looked back to Ginny impatiently, "Well, come on, let's see what you got."

Hermione joined Harry in his wheedling, "Yeah, Ginny, come on, open it up."

Ginny finally just tore the envelope apart and looked at her scores. She gasped softly in surprise and then laid the sheet down on the table for Harry and Hermione to look at.

O.W.L. scores for Virginia Molly Weasley

Astronomy E

Defense Against the Dark Arts O

Ancient Runes E

Care of Magical Creatures O

Potions A

Herbology E

Charms O+

Transfiguration E

History of Magic A

Divination A

Harry looked over the scores in awe, "Wow, Ginny, you did great."

Ginny shrugged, "I would have liked to do better in Potions and History of Magic, but I guess that I did my best."

Hermione was the first to inquire, "So, Ginny, what subjects are you going to take into N.E.W.T. level?"

Ginny replied, "I want to be a Rune Translator, so I have to take History of Magic, Charms, Transfiguration, Defense Against the Dark Arts, and Ancient Runes."

Harry smiled, "Cool. As a Rune Translator, you would work with Charm Breakers like Bill wouldn't you?"

Ginny nodded, "If you get involved with fieldwork, then yes. Some of them just sit behind desks and wait for the Charm Breakers to bring the runes to them. That would be boring to me, though. I want to get out there and see how things are."

Hermione nodded, "That sounds like it would be an interesting career."

Harry turned to Hermione, “You know, I don’t believe that I have ever asked you what you wanted to do, Hermione? We all know that you could do just about whatever you wanted, but you haven’t told us what that is.”

Hermione smiled, “Well, I have never really been sure what I wanted to do, so I took a mix of subjects to N.E.W.T. level that would leave me a lot of options. I don’t really think that I would want to be an Auror, but to work as an Unspeakable might be interesting. I’ve also thought about going into Experimental Charms. I believe I have told you before that I had thought about taking S.P.E.W. to the next level.”

Ron interrupted, “Oh God, not that spew stuff again. I thought that you had forgotten about it since you hadn’t mentioned it in awhile.”

Hermione responded hotly, “It is not spew, Ron. The house elves deserve fair wages just like anyone else.”

Harry stopped her, “Do they?”

Hermione turned to look at Harry in hurt amazement, “What do you mean? Of course they deserve to be paid. How could you even say something like that?”

Harry nodded, “So, you believe that house elves have done something so horrible that they deserve to be insulted and degraded?”

Hermione gasped, “No, of course not. They deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.”

“Which is how most house elves are treated. Dobby likes to be paid and have his freedom because he was mistreated. If he had been my house elf from the beginning, do you think that he would want to be free?” continued Harry.

Hermione spluttered considering that she could think of no appropriate response. Harry took this time to slit open his Hogwart’s letter, and begin reading it. Ron merely sat and gaped in amazement. He had never seen anyone leave Hermione with nothing to say before. Harry continued reading amidst the silence that surrounded him. He smiled and said, “Well, isn’t that a surprise.”

Ginny asked him, “What’s a surprise?”

Harry fished around in his envelope and pulled out the Head Boy badge. He held it out for the others to see. “I’m the new Head Boy.”

Hermione was the first to respond, “You’re not a Prefect, though.”

Harry shook his head, “You don’t have to be. My Dad wasn’t a Prefect, but he was Head Boy.”

Ron clapped Harry on the shoulder, “Well, mate, it looks like you are following in the footsteps of the Potters.”

Harry smiled, “Since I am the last one, I suppose that I didn’t have much of a choice.”

Ginny leaned over and kissed him on the lips. Ron gagged, “I could have done without that mental picture this early in the morning, Gin.”

Ginny looked up at him, “Then, turn your head.” Then, she kissed Harry again. Ron just walked out of the room. Hermione quickly followed him.

Molly walked into the kitchen a moment later. She smiled at Harry and Ginny, who abruptly broke apart as they realized that Molly was in the room. Harry grinned sheepishly as Ginny flushed scarlet. “So, I see that the two of you found your Hogwart’s letters.”

Ginny smiled, “Yes, we did. Harry got some good news out of his.”

Molly turned to look inquiringly at Harry. Harry snorted, “I don’t know if I would call it good news or not, but I’m the new Head Boy.”

Molly squealed in delight and grabbed Harry in a hug, “Harry, I’m so happy. That makes three Head Boys in the family.”

Harry grinned at Ginny over Molly's shoulder. Ginny smiled back at the implication behind Molly's words. It was obvious to both of them that Molly thought of Harry as her own son. Molly finally ended the hug and stepped back. Well, since all of you have your Hogwarts letters, then we should go to Diagon Alley tomorrow."

Harry nodded, "I think that is a good idea. I have to go anyway. My Apparation test is tomorrow. I want to go out into Muggle London to do some shopping for Muggle clothing, too."

Molly agreed, "I guess that will be alright. Now, Virginia, I want to see your O.W.L. scores." She extended her hand. Ginny picked up the sheet off the table and handed it to her mother. Molly smiled as she looked at the scores, "You did very well, Ginny. I'm so proud of you." Molly enveloped Ginny into one of the famous Weasley hugs. Harry smirked at her over Molly's shoulder as if to say it's your turn.

Ginny broke out of the hug and said, "Mum, I think that I am going to go upstairs." She walked out of the kitchen while giving Harry a meaningful look. Harry smiled at Molly and then quickly followed Ginny out of the room.

Molly sighed as they left, "Young love."

The next day all four of the teenagers ate breakfast early and then got ready to go into Diagon Alley. Before they stepped into the Floo, Ron said, "I just hope that we can have some fun today. I don't want a repeat of last year."

Everyone laughed and then grabbed a pinch of Floo Powder before stepping into the fireplace. They came out the other end into the Leaky Cauldron. The first stop was obviously Gringotts. Ginny rode down to Harry's vault with him. She gasped when she saw the mound of money that was stacked in the vault. "Harry, I didn't realize that you had so much Muggle money."

Harry snorted, "This isn't even the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. I just had a very small amount of my Muggle fortune transferred into this vault for convenience. I don't want to have to deal with Muggle bankers every time that I need some pounds. I have actually been considering having my entire Muggle fortune converted into wizard gold, but then I figured that would be stupid."

Ginny continued to stare around her in awe, "It's just hard to imagine what anyone would do with this much money."

Harry laughed, "Well, you need to start imagining. Remember, all of this will be yours as well in a couple of years."

Ginny shook her head, "This will never truly be mine. I don't think that I will ever get used to having this kind of wealth."

Harry replied, "Yes, you will. I'm already beginning to get used to it myself."

Ginny looked at him from the corner of her eye, "We'll see."

Harry just grinned as he proceeded to rake some Galleons and Sickles into his bag. Then, he picked a stack of one-hundred pound notes. He looked over at Ginny, "I think that this should be plenty for what we want to do today."

"What do you want to do today?"

"I'm going shopping for some Muggle clothes. I'm tired of not having anything to wear other than Dudley's hand-me-downs. I want clothes that actually fit me for a change." replied Harry.

Ginny looked at the stack of money, "Well, I don't know how much clothes cost in the Muggle world, but I think that should be plenty for you to get some clothes."

Harry paused in thought, "You're right. It might take more than this. I plan on getting you some clothes too."

"Oh no, you're not." responded Ginny hotly.

"Who is going to stop me?" asked Harry mildly.

“I will. I won’t wear any clothes that you buy for me.” stated Ginny firmly.

Harry laughed, “That’s fine with me. I’m not going to be buying the clothes. You are. So I don’t suppose that we have any problems then.”

“What do you mean I’m buying them?” asked Ginny suspiciously.

Harry placed a second stack of Muggle money in Ginny’s hands. “This is what I mean. This money is yours. You can do with it as you please.” Harry turned and walked out of the vault. He looked back over his shoulder and held out his hand, “Are you coming?”

Ginny looked back and forth between the stack of money and Harry. Finally, she stuffed the money into a pocket of her robes and strode over to Harry. She pulled back one of her hands and slapped him resoundingly across the cheek. Then, she grabbed him and planted a kiss on his lips.

Harry looked at her as if she had lost her mind, “What was that for?”

Ginny smiled, “I slapped you for being a pain. Then, I kissed you for being the kindest, sweetest man on Earth.”

Harry shook his head in bemusement, “I don’t think that I will ever completely understand women.” Harry continued to shake his head through the entire journey back up to the surface. The group spent about half the day in Diagon Alley getting their things. During the course of the day they stopped at the Ministry for Harry to take his Apparation test. He passed with flying colors and received his license to Apparate. They left their books and supplies in Fred and George’s shop.

Fred and George asked, “So, what are you lot up to now?”

Harry chuckled, “We’re going into Muggle London to shop for clothes. Do you want to come?”

Fred and George both nodded enthusiastically, “Sure. We can close up shop for the rest of the day.”

Harry fell into step with them as they left the store, “So, how are you coming on the things that I asked for at the last meeting?”

Fred and George both grinned at each other. Fred said, “I think that you are going to be pleased.”

George nodded, “I think so, too. We will have several prototypes of items at the next meeting.”

Harry grinned and nodded, “Good. Once I have approved the prototypes, I will probably need the items mass produced quickly. In most situations, there are going to be a great deal more of the bad guys than us. We’re going to need those things to even the odds.”

Fred snorted, “Harry, you even the odds all by yourself.”

Harry shook his head, “Not if Voldemort is present. If he’s around, I will have to devote my attention to keeping him from killing everyone. I won’t be able to fight all the others. That will be the Order’s job.”

Fred and George nodded, “We understand, Harry.”

Harry chuckled, “That’s enough serious talk. We are going to enjoy the rest of the day.” The group stepped out the front entrance of the Leaky Cauldron onto the Muggle street.

Harry led the group towards Oxford Street. They went into several clothing places. Harry tried on various shirts and slacks. He waited for Ginny’s approval before buying anything. After Harry was done, it was time for Ginny to begin modeling clothes. She picked out some nice dresses, and some pullover and skirt combinations. Once they were finished, Harry and Ginny were both wearing new clothes out of the shops.

Ginny grabbed Harry in a kiss right on the street. Several passers-by gawked at them for the overt display of affection. The rest of the group laughed at them as they broke apart. Harry asked, “What was that for?”

“For a perfect day.” answered Ginny.

Harry grinned, "The day isn't over yet."

Ron asked, "What is that supposed to mean?"

"I think that since we have been shopping all day that we deserve a nice dinner in a restaurant as a treat." said Harry.

Hermione asked, "So, are we going to go back and eat at the Leaky Cauldron or something?"

Harry shook his head, "No, I was thinking that we should try some upscale Muggle dining. So, I have reservations at a restaurant near here." Harry glanced at his watch, "We need to hurry. The reservation is in forty minutes."

Molly protested, "We're not dressed for this."

Harry grinned, "Step into the alley." They all complied, and Harry waved his hand at them. Everyone's clothing was transfigured into fancy Muggle clothes. "That takes care of the clothes problem."

Molly continued to protest, "We can't go without Arthur, Bill, and Charlie. I think that we should just go back to headquarters."

Harry chuckled, "Not a problem. Arthur, Bill, and Charlie already know about it. They are going to meet us at the restaurant."

Ginny looked at Harry in amazement, "You set this all up."

Harry nodded, "But of course. I knew that I wanted to take my family out to dinner before we went back to school. This was going to be my best opportunity."

Molly sighed, "I guess we might as well go. We're going to be late if we don't hurry."

Harry smiled in triumph, "I knew that you would see it my way. Let's go." Harry led the way towards the restaurant. When they got there they found the three older Weasleys waiting for them in the entrance room. Harry greeted them, "I'm glad that you found the place."

Arthur grinned, "We had just a little bit of trouble finding it, but we got here."

Charlie clapped Bill on the back, "Bill is the one that figured out how to get here. Dad and I would have been wandering around forever."

Everyone else laughed. The Hostess came up to them. "May I help you?"

Harry looked over at her, "Yes, I have a reservation for Lord Gryffindor."

The woman's eyes widened in surprise as she recognized Harry from the press coverage of his presentation party. "Right this way, My Lord. We have the back room ready for you."

Harry, Hermione, and the Weasleys followed the Hostess to their table. Harry pulled out the chair for Ginny, while Arthur pulled out a chair for Molly. Hermione looked pointedly at Ron, who quickly took the hint and copied Arthur and Harry. He pulled out a chair for Hermione. Hermione smiled and then took her seat. Once the three ladies were seated, the men took their seats and very quickly the waitress came up to take their orders. There was a lot of friendly banter over the meal. The evening passed quickly, and when they were finished with the meal, all of them returned to Grimmauld Place.

7. Return to Hogwarts

A few days after the trip into Diagon Alley, Harry called a meeting of the Order of the Phoenix. Everyone arrived and sat around the table. Kingsley was the first one to speak, “Harry, why are we here?”

Harry grinned, “We are here to discuss the implementation of the weapons that I had instructed the Weasley twins to make. They have informed me that they have some prototype items to demonstrate. Fred, George, I will let you have the floor.”

The twins stood up. Fred began, “Harry told us that he wanted something that functioned like a Muggle grenade.”

George continued, “For those of you that don’t know what a grenade is, they are a type of Muggle explosive that you pull a pin out of, and then throw. About ten seconds after you pull the pin and let the handle fly off, they blow up, and send small pieces of metal flying in all directions.”

Fred nodded, “We have developed something similar to that.” He held up a small ball. “We call these Weasley bombs for obvious reasons. They can be activated by tapping your wand against them. Once you do they will blow up in about ten seconds.”

McGonagall asked, “What do they do when they blow up?”

George answered, “Harry said that he didn’t want anything too dangerous, so when they blow up they send about twenty minor hexes flying.”

Dumbledore chuckled, “Which ones?”

Fred replied, “We didn’t think that Harry would want Stunning Spells or Full Body Binds because they could incapacitate the user, so we filled it with Leg Tangling Charms, Tickling Charms, and Leg Locker Curses. We figured that those would be enough to disorient the enemy.”

Harry smiled, “Excellent work. Now all we need to do is test them. Volunteers?”

Ron jumped up, “Count me in. I want to see this first hand.”

Ginny nodded, “I’ll do it, too.”

Bill and Charlie smiled and then chorused twin fashion, “You can count on us, Harry.”

Tonks jumped in, “This is going to be fun. I’m in.”

Harry nodded, “That should be enough. I’ll stay in as well. Everyone else, out of the kitchen.”

Molly asked, “Do you want us to close the door?”

Harry shook his head, “No, I will put a barrier on the doorway to keep stray hexes from exiting the kitchen.” Once everyone that wasn’t participating was outside the room, Harry waved his hand at the doorway. “Fred, since you seem to be the one holding the bomb, I believe you have the honors.”

Fred tapped his wand to the device, and dropped it onto the floor. The array of people in the kitchen counted to ten and waited for the hexes to fly. Fred and George were both hit with Leg Tangling Charms and began to dance madly about. Harry was hit by a couple of curses, but as expected they did nothing to him. Ginny managed to twist out of the way of the curses that headed her way. Ron and Hermione were both caught with Leg Locker curses. Ron also got hit with a Tickling Charm on top of the Leg Locker. Harry chuckled at everyone’s discomfiture. He waved his hand and countered all the curses that were in effect. Another wave of his hand and the barrier that covered the doorway disappeared. “That was excellent. However, I think that we probably need multiple grades. One with more curses packed into it would be more useful if there were more enemies. This would only be effective if there was less than ten. Otherwise, the curses would fail to distract enough of the enemy. Not to mention they can be avoided too easily, as Ginny just demonstrated.”

Ron interjected, “You’re just saying that because you’re in love with her. She just got lucky.”

Harry laughed, "I wouldn't make statements like that if I were you, Ron. You might find that people will expect you to back them up."

Ron looked bewildered, "What are you talking about?"

Harry nodded towards Ginny. Ron turned to look at his little sister to find her red in the face. She finally said, "Ron, if you think that you are so good, I challenge you to a duel. Swords and wands. To keep from actually hurting each other, we'll use the practice swords and we'll let Tonks judge wounds. The first dueling club meeting should be the perfect arena."

Ron gaped, "You can't be serious. I can't duel my baby sister in front of people. They would say that I was picking on you or something."

Harry snorted, "They won't think that you are picking on her when she beats you, Ron."

Ron turned to look at Harry, "How is she going to beat me, Harry? I've got a whole year of schooling on her."

Harry shook his head, "I don't think so. Remember that she got a lot of extra tutoring from me. I think that she would have little trouble beating you with a sword and wand. You could probably beat her in physical combat, but she's got you in this respect."

Ron drew his mouth into a thin line that was reminiscent of McGonagall, "Well, I guess that we will just have to see. I accept the challenge. We will face each other at the first dueling club meeting."

Ginny turned to look at Harry, "That is okay with you, isn't it?"

Harry nodded, "I like starting things with a bang. That should do nicely."

The rest of the Order had filed back into the room by the time that this conversation was ended. Harry turned back to the twins as everyone took their seats, "Now, what else have the two of you cooked up? You told me that you had a few items for me to see."

Fred laughed, "You always get to the point don't you, Boss? We have two more items to show you. I'll explain the first. It's an invisibility booster for a single person. You attach it to your arm like this. " Fred held up something that appeared to be a bracelet, and then put it around his wrist. "Then, you tap it with your wand, and say 'hide' to activate it." Fred tapped his wand to the bracelet, "Hide." He disappeared from view. He reappeared a moment later. "To become visible again you just have to tap your wand against it."

McGonagall gasped, "I didn't think that the two of you ever paid attention in class."

Harry laughed, "They paid attention alright. They paid attention to anything that could help them invent joke merchandise. The rest of their education went in one ear and right back out the other. Excellent work. However, we will need to modify them slightly."

Molly asked, "Why? They seemed to work quite well."

Harry nodded, "They do. I just don't like the simple deactivation. If you are sneaking up on a group of Death Eaters, and bump your wand into the bracelet and make yourself visible, you would be in serious trouble."

Mad-Eye grinned, "I like the way you think, Potter. You've got the makings of an excellent Auror."

Harry smiled, "Perhaps. I doubt that I will ever be one, though. I have a different career path in mind."

Dumbledore asked, "What is that, Harry?"

Harry shrugged, "Tonks has said that she isn't cut out for teaching, so I figured if you would have me on the staff, that I would take the Defense Against the Dark Arts position."

Snape sighed, "A Potter on the staff at Hogwarts. What is this world coming to?"

Everyone laughed, Harry the loudest of all. Dumbledore smiled, "Harry, I would be honored to have you join us on the staff. I'm sure that Tonks is ready to get back to the Ministry."

“She’ll have to wait another year at least. I don’t need to worry about teaching with Voldemort still on the loose. He is going to require my attention for awhile yet.”

Ron said, “At least we don’t have to worry about Harry leaving after one year.”

Hermione turned to him, “Why not?”

Ron continued, “Well, think about it. The first DADA teacher that we had was possessed by You-Know-Who. There’s no real chance of that happening to Harry. The second was hit by a Memory Charm. I don’t think that those would even work on Harry. The third one left because he was a werewolf. I don’t think that Harry is a werewolf, so there is no problem there. Our fourth DADA professor was an imposter. No chance of that. The fifth one was Umbridge. Do I even have to explain that one?”

Ginny laughed as she snuggled closer to Harry, “Ron actually made a good point.”

Ron appeared as if he was going to retort, but Harry cut him off, “Well, George, I believe that you were going to show us the final item.”

George stood up and held out something that looked like a small Muggle coin. “This is a locating device. You can toss it onto someone and then use the tracking unit to find them.” He held up another device. This was a small rectangular box like object. “This is the tracking unit. All you have to do is tap your wand to it and say locate. It will show you where the locating device is. Like so.” George tapped his wand to the tracking unit and said, “Locate.” Ethereal letters appeared in the air above the box. They said, ‘Kitchen, #12 Grimmauld Place.’

Harry grinned, “That is amazing. I’m impressed you two. Get to work on mass producing them right away. Make sure to make the modifications that I specified, and that should give the two of you plenty to do.”

The twins nodded, “You better believe it. We will have a good stockpile ready in a couple of weeks.”

Harry nodded back at them, “Excellent. Is there anything else that anyone wishes to discuss?”

The members of the Order shook their heads. Harry continued, “I presume that will do for the time being, then. I expect that our next meeting will take place at Hogwarts considering that I am returning there in a few days. I will see all of you then.”

Harry turned to Ginny and held out his hand. She took it, and the two of them walked into the sitting room and sat down on the couch. They cuddled together and began to talk softly to each other.

Remus grinned as he watched them, “I wish that Sirius was here to see this. He would have made a huge spectacle out of Harry being in love.”

Molly chuckled from where she was standing beside him, “I’m sure that he knows. James, Lily, and Sirius are all very proud of him.”

McGonagall interrupted their musings, “As are we all. Harry is one of the bravest and wisest young men that I have ever met. He deserves some happiness in his life. Miss Weasley has given that to him. I am proud to have both of them as students.”

Remus looked at McGonagall in mild surprise, “Who knew? All those years of throwing Sirius and James in detention, and you are really an old softie underneath it all, Minerva.”

McGonagall smiled, “Yes, well, it wouldn’t do for my students to know that, would it?”

Remus laughed softly, “I suppose not. They would think that they could get away with anything if they did. I guess the stern act serves a purpose.”

The last few days of the summer holidays passed by in a blur. The morning that they were return to Hogwarts arrived amidst a great deal of confusion as everyone ran one way and then the other trying to make sure that they had packed everything at the last minute. Harry stood calmly amidst the chaos with an almost bored expression on his face. Ginny asked him, “Why aren’t you trying to make sure that you have everything?”

Harry replied, "I know that I have everything. Besides, if I did forget something, I could just pop back and grab it. I would be back at Hogwarts so quickly that not even Dumbledore would know that I had been gone."

Ginny stuck out her tongue at him, "Spoilsport."

Harry snickered, "I suppose. Now, hurry up. I'm ready to head for the train."

Ginny huffed as she darted back up the stairs to make one last check of her room.

Everyone was finally assembled in the foyer and ready to go. Lupin was standing outside with the car waiting to take them all to King's Cross station. Everyone piled into the magically expanded vehicle. The drive to the station was quiet and uneventful. Harry and the others made their way through the station and onto Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. Once they were on the platform, other students began calling out greetings to Harry, Hermione, Ginny, and Ron. Neville ran up to them, "Hey guys, what's up?"

Harry grinned, "Not much. I'm just ready to get back to Hogwarts."

Neville nodded, "Me too. It is kind of sad, though."

Ron asked, "What is?"

Neville shrugged, "Well, this is our last year. After this it's over."

Harry laughed, "Not for me. I'm going to be on staff after this."

Neville smiled, "I figured as much. The way you've handled the dueling club, I expected you to take the Defense Against the Dark Arts."

Harry said, "I'm glad that you like the idea. Now, let's say our good-byes. I'm ready to settle down and cuddle for the trip to Hogwarts."

Ginny smiled at him, "I think that sounds wonderful, Harry."

"I thought you might," said Harry.

Ron jumped in, "The two of you are completely disgusting. Do you have to do that in front of us?"

Ginny slapped him on the arm, "Nobody says that you have to watch. Turn your head, or an even better idea, try paying attention to your own girlfriend. You never know, it might work out."

Hermione nodded, "I think that you might be right."

Luna walked up to them, "I know she is." She kissed Neville in greeting. The group of students said their good-byes to their parents. Then, they boarded the train and found an empty compartment to have to themselves. After putting up their trunks, Harry, Hermione, Ginny, Ron and Luna went to the prefect's carriage. Harry and Hermione walked up to the front of the carriage and gave out the announcements that were placed there for them. Draco sat and stared in shock at the newly appointed Head Boy and Girl. Once they were through with welcoming the new prefects, and giving them the rules that they must abide by as prefects, they went back to the carriage where Neville was waiting for them. The three couples sat down, the girls practically sitting in the boy's laps. They remained that way until the lunch trolley came by. Harry treated them all to lunch. After that they started talking.

Hermione asked, "So, Neville, we were discussing what we were thinking about doing after school. What are you planning on?"

Neville smiled, "Well, I may be on staff next year. Madam Sprout is thinking about retiring after this year. If she decides to, and I get the N.E.W.T. scores that I need, I intend to apply for the job. Madam Sprout said that she would give me a recommendation."

Harry nodded, "I wouldn't mind having you on staff with me. I'm sure that we'll need someone to help liven the mood. Snape and McGonagall are serious enough for everyone."

Ginny smiled, "That's great, Neville."

Luna asked, "Does this mean that you are going to be my Herbology teacher next year?"

Ginny paused, "I hadn't thought about it that way. That means that you, Mr. Potter, are going to be my Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher."

Harry smirked, "Yes, I know. You will have to start practicing calling me Professor this summer."

Ron laughed, "That's going to be interesting. I'll bet the twins will have a field day with that one."

Harry shook his head, "Not if they know what is good for their health."

Ginny hugged Harry, "I knew there was a reason that I fell in love with you."

Harry said, "I see how it is. You only love me because I can beat up your brothers."

Ginny shook her head, "No, I love you for a lot of reasons."

"I know. I was just teasing." Harry chuckled.

The banter continued for the rest of the train ride. Once they arrived at the station, Draco stepped in front of Harry. "Malfoy, I suggest that you step out of the way."

"I'm delivering a message, Potter." replied Malfoy evenly.

Harry raised his eyebrows, "Then, deliver it. I have better things to do with my time than stand here with you."

"My master says that you should beware time."

Harry nodded curtly, "Consider your message delivered, Malfoy."

Draco stalked away, "Have a short life, Potter."

Hermione asked, "What did that mean?"

Harry shook his head, "I'll explain later. We'll wait until we can talk to Dumbledore. He will want to know about this as soon as possible, I am sure."

All of them walked into the Great Hall and sat down at their respective House tables. McGonagall ushered in the first years a few moments later. She put the Sorting Hat on its stool. The mouth split open, and the Sorting Hat began to sing.

*The events of last year
would cause one to shed a tear.*

It all turned out alright,

Although I expect another fight

To mar the grounds of Hogwarts

And get everyone out of sorts.

I sense change is near,

Perhaps for the worse I fear.

For now I'll do my job

And separate the mob.

So, step right up, and I'll see

Where you need to be.

Everyone applauded throughout the Great Hall. McGonagall pulled out a list, "When I call out your names, come forward and sit on the stool. I will place the Sorting Hat on your head, and it will tell you to which House you belong." She began to call out names down the list. Once she was finished and all the first years were seated at their House tables, Dumbledore stood up.

“Welcome to another year at Hogwarts. I am pleased to announce that for the first time in six years, I do not have to announce the appointment of a new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. I would like everyone to welcome back Professor Nymphadora Tonks.” There was a loud round of applause. The loudest from the Gryffindor table. Surprisingly enough, even the Slytherins were clapping. Most of them anyway. Dumbledore continued, “I would like to remind everyone that the Forbidden Forest is off limits to all students.” Dumbledore exchanged glances with Harry, who smiled. “Quidditch tryouts may be held by the Captains anytime after the first week of school. All students second year and above should check the House bulletin boards for times. I would like to congratulate our new Head Boy and Girl. Mr. Harry Potter and Ms. Hermione Granger. To finish this speech, I have only two words, Tuck in.” Dumbledore clapped his hands, and the feast appeared on the dishes set at the tables. Most of the first years squealed in delight.

The chatter in the room reached a dull roar as the students consumed their food. After the feast was finished, Dumbledore stood again, “Prefects, if you would lead the first years back to the dormitories, we will bring this evening to a close.”

Harry got up, and headed for the Head Table. Ron, Ginny, and Hermione started to walk in the other direction, but Harry stopped them with a word, “Wait. The other prefects can handle the first years. Get Luna and Neville. We’re going to Dumbledore’s office.” Harry proceeded to walk up to the Head Table. He stopped in front of the Headmaster, “I’m afraid that we need to talk, sir. Its important.”

Dumbledore nodded in response, “Follow me, then.” Dumbledore stood and walked out of the Great Hall. Harry turned his gaze to McGonagall and then Snape. He nodded in answer to the questioning glances of the two of them. They stood and followed Dumbledore out of the room.

Harry walked back to his friends, “Lets go.” They followed him through the corridors, and up to Dumbledore’s office. Dumbledore was standing in the corridor waiting on him.

“I see that you have brought company, Harry.”

“Yes, they need to hear this, too. They were there when it began.”

Dumbledore’s eyes widened, “I take it this is serious.”

Harry nodded glumly, “Most likely this is the most serious thing that we have ever discussed, Albus.”

Dumbledore turned to the gargoyles, “Smoors.”

Harry couldn’t suppress a grin, “So, now you are using a Muggle sweet as a password. You never cease to amaze me.”

Dumbledore chuckled, “I am one hundred and fifty-eight years old, Harry. Sometimes, I still amaze myself.”

Hermione asked as they walked up the stairs, “How can the two of you make jokes when the fate of the world is hanging in the balance?”

Harry turned to Hermione and said quietly, “Hermione, if we stop enjoying life just because there is a battle to fight, then Voldemort has already won. Every person on this planet that lives their lives normally despite Voldemort is helping us win the fight against him. If people didn’t cherish life, what exactly would I be trying to save?”

No one responded to the heartfelt words that Harry had spoken. They walked into Dumbledore’s office where McGonagall and Snape were waiting. Dumbledore sat behind his desk as the six students found seats. Dumbledore began, “So, Harry, why have we gathered here this evening?”

“This concerns our resident Death Eater. Malfoy delivered a message to me, earlier. He told me that Voldemort said to beware time.” began Harry.

Snape asked, “What does that mean?”

Harry sighed, “It means that Voldemort plans to cast a time travel spell. He is going to disrupt time in some way. I expect him to attempt to kill my past self, or Dumbledore’s past self.”

McGonagall asked, "Why would he attempt to meddle with time this way? The consequences could be disastrous even for him."

Harry shrugged, "I presume that he thinks that the risks are justified. He knows that if he goes back in time, that I will go back to face him. If he manages to kill my past self, then the fallout when I return to the present and create a paradox will be horrid. If he kills a past version of Dumbledore, then the consequences will be just as dire."

Ginny asked, "I don't get it. How will killing a past version of Dumbledore cause the same effects as you dying? Won't Dumbledore be within the flow of time when it occurs?"

Harry nodded and smiled, "Very astute observation, my dear. However, you aren't thinking of the consequences of Dumbledore dying before my birth. If he isn't around, who will protect my baby self from Voldemort? If Dumbledore is dead, then Voldemort's past self will be able to kill my past self. This will happen while I am still out of the flow of time, and the consequences would be the same as if he had went back and killed me."

Dumbledore asked, "Knowing Tom's mind the way that you do, which of the two scenarios do you think that he will pursue?"

Harry paused for a moment to think, "I think it most likely that he will attempt to kill a past version of you. He will expect that to be easier than killing me."

Hermione asked, "Why?"

"If he goes back to try and kill a past version of me, I will still have the same protection from my mother. That could easily backfire on him. He may be able to touch me now, but he still doesn't know if it is possible to kill me." said Harry.

Snape sighed, "To think that I ever served that bastard. Harry, I'm sorry for everything that I have ever said to you."

Harry smiled, and stood up to walk over beside Snape. He laid a hand on Snape's shoulder, "Your past is just that, your past. What matters is that when it really counted, you were on the right side."

Dumbledore smiled at the amazed look on McGonagall's face, "I think that is enough for this evening. We will call a formal Order meeting tomorrow night if that is what you would like, Harry."

Harry nodded, "I believe that the rest of the Order needs to be made aware of this. I want to bring Frank and Alice back into the Order. I think that it is time."

Dumbledore smiled, "I'm sure that Frank would agree with you. I have spoken with him a few times this summer, and he seems to be ready for action."

Harry chuckled, "After this many years, I expect that he is beginning to get a little stir-crazy. I will have plenty for him to do. I look forward to seeing all of you tomorrow tonight." Harry got up to leave, and the other students followed him.

Once the teenagers had left the office, Snape looked at Dumbledore, "Albus, I had my doubts at first, but I don't think that we could have chosen a better leader to follow."

Albus shook his head, "I know that we couldn't have."

8. Hunting, Again

The first morning of school found Harry and Ginny sitting together at the Gryffindor table for breakfast. Ron, Hermione, Neville, and Luna joined them. McGonagall passed out the timetables, while everyone was eating. Harry glanced down at his, “Not bad. We start Monday morning with Double Defense Against the Dark Arts, and then we’ve got Charms this afternoon.”

Ron nodded, “I like this. It’s a good Monday.”

Hermione and Neville nodded. Harry asked, “How’s your Monday, Ginny?”

Ginny smiled, “I’ve got Transfiguration this morning, and Double Ancient Runes this afternoon.”

Luna nodded, “That’s not bad. I’ve got Transfiguration with you, but I have Double Herbology this afternoon.”

Harry laughed, “She’s getting ready for you to be her teacher next year, Neville.”

Neville blushed slightly, “I suppose. We’ll just have to wait and see.”

After breakfast all of them headed for class. Harry, Neville, Hermione, and Ron walked to the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom. They took their customary seats at the front of the classroom. A few moments later, Tonks walked into the room. “Good morning. Welcome to the final year of N.E.W.T. Defense Against the Dark Arts. I want to begin by discussing what we will be covering this term. I must warn all of you that the N.E.W.T. for this course will be very difficult to obtain. The written examination will test your knowledge of defensive techniques to every major curse that we have ever studied. The practical examination will involve defending yourself against a variety of curses. This part of the test will be performed by Aurors.”

Neville raised his hand, “Does this mean that we will have to duel with Aurors?”

Tonks shook her head, “No, you won’t exactly be dueling with them. They will be determining if you can dodge curses, and also determining if you can counter them once you are hit. I think that all of you are members of the dueling club. I would recommend that you continue with it. Mr. Potter is doing an excellent job of teaching you how to duel. The skills that you learn in the dueling club will come in handy for the test.”

Terry Boot raised his hand, “Are we going to have the dueling club meeting tonight?”

Tonks turned to Harry, “I think that is a question for Mr. Potter.”

Harry grinned, “No, we will not be having a meeting this evening. We will start on Thursday. From there we will continue with the usual Monday-Thursday routine from last year. I will have announcements posted on the house bulletin boards by tomorrow.”

Tonks swept her gaze back across the rest of the class, “I believe that settles that. Now, let us begin.”

After class and the morning break was over, Harry met Ginny in the Great Hall for lunch. Ginny asked, “Where are Ron, Hermione, and Neville?”

Harry sighed, “Hermione decided to start on the Defense homework and went to the library. Ron decided to follow her. My best guess is Ron is trying to keep Hermione from studying too much. Neville went to look for Luna. They were discussing going to see Hagrid about getting some magical creatures for class.”

Ginny smiled, “So, I guess that it is just the two of us.”

Harry smiled, “Yes, Miss Weasley, I believe it is.”

While they were eating, Malfoy and his bunch of Slytherin cronies walked over to the Gryffindor table. Harry looked up as Malfoy’s shadow fell across his plate, “What do you want, Malfoy.”

Malfoy flashed a feral smile, “I was told to deliver another message.”

Harry laughed shortly, "I see that Tom has finally found a job that you can actually handle. An errand boy."

Malfoy drew his wand, "You'll pay for that, Potter."

"Don't make me laugh, Malfoy. You couldn't harm me with the most powerful spell that you could muster. Now, deliver your message." Harry said.

Malfoy shook with rage as he pointed the wand at Harry. Finally, he put his wand back into his robes and said, "The Dark Lord says that the time is drawing near for your end. Beware."

Harry snorted, "Unless Tom has a better message than that, I suggest you never interrupt my lunch with his trivial messages again."

Malfoy spun and swept away with his fellow Slytherins following in his wake. After lunch Harry kissed Ginny, and then met Ron, Neville, and Hermione on the way to Charms class. He grinned at them, "So, what have the three of you been doing all this time?"

Ron and Hermione blushed. Neville merely shrugged, "I was walking around the grounds with Luna. We had a nice time."

Harry nodded, "I'm sure that you enjoyed sneaking off to snog very much."

Neville grinned, "At least I find some place private to do it. From what I've heard and seen, you and Ginny will start snogging in front of anyone."

Ron and Hermione laughed, while Harry's mouth dropped open in astonishment. Ron said, "He's got you there, mate."

Harry turned to walk away, "Let's just get to class. Flitwick won't want us to be late." The other three followed him down the corridor.

Once all the students were assembled into the Charms classroom, Flitwick came in and climbed up onto the desk. "May I have your attention? I would like to begin. Today, we will be discussing the Concealment Charm. This is one of the major portions of the practical N.E.W.T. Charms exam. You will be tested on your ability to conceal yourself."

Hermione asked, "What else will be on the exam?"

Flitwick chuckled, "Not now, Miss Granger. I don't want to overload everyone with information at once. We will take everything that we have to study and break it down piece by piece. After that I am confident that all of you will do quite well on your N.E.W.T.'s. Now, onto the Concealment Charm. The wand movement for the Concealment Charm must be very precise. It is a complicated series of stabbing motions." Flitwick paused in his lecturing to demonstrate. "The incantation associated with the charm is *Concelo Illusio Obscuro*. You must say the incantation at an even pace, so that you begin speaking with the first stabbing motion, and complete the incantation with the final stabbing motion. This is probably one of the most difficult charms that you will ever have to perform. Let me demonstrate the charm." Flitwick began the complicated series of stabbing motions, "*Concelo Illusio Obscuro*." He finished and then light seemed to bend around him. If you stared straight at the spot where Flitwick disappeared you could still see a slight shimmer. A moment later Flitwick reappeared.

Padma Patil raised her hand, "Professor, we could still see where you were."

Flitwick nodded, "I know. True invisibility is a feat that only the most powerful wizards can accomplish."

Hermione asked, "Can you do it?"

Flitwick shook his head, "I can cast an invisibility spell on an object, but I can not cast an invisibility charm on anything living."

Padma asked, "Do you know anyone that can?"

Flitwick nodded, "The Headmaster is capable of such a feat. I know of no one else that could."

Ron asked, "How about You-Know-Who? Could he do it?"

Flitwick shrugged, "I would expect him to be capable of it, but I do not know for sure."

Harry finally spoke, "He can."

Terry asked, "How do you know?"

Harry answered, "I know. Leave it at that."

Padma asked, "Can you do it?"

Harry nodded, "Yes, I can make myself invisible."

Flitwick gaped at Harry, "Would you be willing to demonstrate, Mr. Potter?"

Harry smiled, "I suppose that I could indulge you, Professor." Harry got up and walked to the front of the class. He made no motions or anything, but then he disappeared. A moment later, he reappeared behind Padma. He tapped her on the shoulder.

Padma jumped and spun around, "You scared me."

Harry grinned, "My apologies. I thought that I would try to be slightly dramatic."

Flitwick looked at Harry in amazement, "Harry, you didn't use a wand."

"I know. Voldemort broke my wand when he stepped on it during the battle. I don't need a wand to do anything anymore." said Harry.

The class sat in stunned amazement. Harry shook his head in amusement as the bell rang to end class. Harry waved his hand, and summoned his books to him. Then, he turned and walked out the door, while the rest of the class remained sitting in a stupor.

Harry went to the Ancient Runes corridor and met Ginny as she came out of the classroom. She looked at him in puzzlement, "What are you doing here?"

Harry replied, "Is it a crime to spy on the most beautiful girl in all of Hogwarts?"

Ginny curled her lip and stared off into space for a moment, "That depends on who the girl is."

Harry grinned, "You, of course."

Ginny smiled brightly, "Then, its okay."

"Ha, ha, very funny. Let's go and do your homework."

"What about your homework?" Ginny asked.

Harry answered, "I'll do my Defense homework after dinner. I didn't get any homework from Charms due to the fact that Flitwick was just a little too shocked to assign any."

Ginny eyed Harry suspiciously, "Why exactly was Flitwick too shocked to give homework?"

Harry shrugged, "I think it had something to do with the fact that he discovered that I can make myself invisible without a wand. It could have been something else, but I'm pretty sure that was it."

Ginny laughed lightly, "I'm sure that it was." Harry turned to lead her down the corridor. Ginny quickly realized that they weren't heading for the Gryffindor common room, "I take it that this means we're not going back to the common room."

Harry shook his head, "No, I don't want to deal with people gawking at me right now. I hope you don't mind studying in the Room of Requirement."

Ginny shook her head and grinned smugly, "No, I don't mind at all. I just hope you realize that we aren't going to get any homework done in there. We haven't snuck away to make-out for awhile."

Harry grinned, "I know. I figured as much. The only homework that I could have helped you with is your Transfiguration anyway. Its not like I understand a thing about those runes."

Ginny placed a hand in front of her mouth in mock surprise, "I'm shocked, Mr. Potter. I can't believe that you are admitting to not knowing something."

Harry shrugged, "Hey, I only know stuff if I have read it or absorbed it from Tom. He didn't take Ancient Runes either, so I don't exactly have a source for the knowledge."

Ginny laughed, "I suppose not."

They reached the corridor that contained the Room of Requirement. Harry walked back and forth three times while envisioning the room that he wanted. Once the door appeared, Harry walked in with Ginny directly behind him. Ginny smiled when she saw the couch sitting in front of a cozy fire. "Why, Mr. Potter, I didn't know that you had such good taste."

Harry snorted, "I picked you, didn't I? I would say that I have excellent taste, and that it's obvious to the rest of the world. How did you miss it?"

Ginny playfully slapped Harry on the arm, "I was just teasing."

Harry grinned as he grabbed Ginny and pulled her into his embrace, "I know." Harry leaned in and kissed her. Both of them dropped their books, and they were soon forgotten as the two of them sat down on the couch and curled up together.

Later that night Harry and Ginny walked into the Great Hall for dinner. Ron looked at the two of them suspiciously, "So, where have the two of you been?"

Harry shrugged, "We decided to sneak off and do what you and Hermione were doing during lunch time."

Ron flushed slightly. Hermione hid her face. Neville laughed at them. Ginny poked him, "I don't know what you're laughing at. You and Luna did the same thing."

Neville continued to laugh, "So, I don't have to be embarrassed about it."

Luna smiled cheekily as Ginny gaped at Neville's boldness. Harry laughed, "Neville, you know that two years ago you would have been terribly embarrassed by a statement like that."

Neville nodded, "I know. That time has passed."

Harry clapped him on the shoulder, "Yes, it has."

While they were all enjoying their dinner, Cornelius Fudge came barging into the Great Hall with a contingent of Auror guards. He stormed up to the Head Table, and Dumbledore rose to meet him. Harry got up from his seat, and followed in Cornelius' wake. By the time that Harry reached the Head table, Cornelius had already bellowed, "I want to speak to you, Dumbledore."

Dumbledore replied, "If that is what you wish, Cornelius. Let us retire to my office."

Cornelius stamped his foot in irritation at Dumbledore's perceived calm, "Very well." As the Dumbledore turned to lead the way from the room, Cornelius noticed Harry for the first time, "We do not require your presence, Potter."

Harry replied, "I will keep my own counsel as to where my presence is required, Cornelius. For you to be in this much of a fuss, then it means that Voldemort is up to something. If he is, then it concerns me." Harry turned to Dumbledore, "Shall we go?"

Dumbledore made a supreme effort to hide the smile that attempted to blossom on his face. Cornelius stewed as he followed them, with the Aurors trailing behind him. They reached Dumbledore's office, and Dumbledore motioned Cornelius to a seat. Harry indicated that he would stand. The Aurors fanned around the room. "What is it, Cornelius?" asked Dumbledore.

Cornelius began, "I have just been in conference with the Prime Minister. Apparently, there have been a great deal of attacks on Muggles by Death Eaters. The Muggle press got wind of the situation today. The details of the attacks have been publicized. They don't understand the implications of it, but the situation is volatile. The Prime Minister is suggesting going after You-Know-Who with the Muggle military."

Harry voiced an objection, "You have to convince him that is a very bad idea. Voldemort and his minions would make short work of the British Army."

Dumbledore finally spoke, “I read the Muggle newspapers. I saw the articles concerning it this morning. We were going to discuss the Order’s response at the meeting this evening.”

Harry snorted, “You know exactly what the Order’s response will be, Headmaster. I will be going to wait at the next most likely target. Hunting Death Eaters is becoming a hobby of mine.”

One of the Aurors laughed and mumbled something under his breath. Unfortunately for him, Harry had excellent ears. Harry turned and strode up to the Auror in question, “So, you think that I have an over inflated opinion of my abilities do you?” The Auror remained stonily silent. Harry continued, “I asked you a question. Are you too much of a coward to respond to a simple student?”

Dumbledore intervened, “That is enough, Harry.”

“No, it isn’t. There might come a day that the Aurors that are present in this room are working with the Order. If they ever do, they need to understand that following my orders is the best course of action. I know more about what Voldemort is likely to do than anyone.” Harry turned back to the Auror, “So, what do you have to say for yourself?”

The Auror replied, “I think that you are an egotistical young boy that entirely too many people have given a free reign to for far too long. The idea that you are going to save the world is a farce.”

“Really. If that is what you think, then we should test your little theory. Hex me. Do everything that you can to attempt to subdue me. I would like to see what they teach you down at the Ministry.”

The Auror drew his wand. Harry stepped back and leaned against the bookshelf. The Auror yelled, “Stupefy.” The curse hit Harry and disappeared. The other Aurors stood and stared in shocked amazement. The Auror yelled again, “Stupefy!”

Harry yawned, “Are you through, yet? If not, let’s hurry this along. There are important things to be discussed, and I don’t have all night.”

One of the Aurors asked, “How are you blocking the curse? You haven’t drawn your wand.”

Harry replied, “I wasn’t blocking the curse. I don’t have a wand. I don’t need one anymore.”

The Auror asked, “What are you talking about? No one can do wandless magic.”

“I can. Expelliarmus.” Harry waved his hand. The wand in the Auror’s grasp went flying.

Another of the Auror’s breathed softly, “Impossible.”

Harry sighed, “I hear that entirely too often. Cornelius, consider the problem taken care of. You can reassure the Prime Minister that I will handle the Death Eaters that are attacking Muggles.”

“You certainly seem sure of yourself, Potter.” sneered Fudge.

“I am, Cornelius. I am.”

Fudge stood up and swept out of the room with the Aurors hot on his heels.

Dumbledore sighed, “Harry, you do have to stop antagonizing Cornelius. He could make a lot of difficulty for you.”

Harry replied, “That’s exactly why I keep doing it. I’m trying to upstage him in front of as many people as I possibly can.”

“Why?”

“As soon as the war with Voldemort is over, I’m going to actively attempt to oust Fudge from office. The worse he looks in the interim, the easier it will be to accomplish later. I’m not going to turn the wizarding world on its head, while Voldemort is still strong, but as soon as it’s safe, there is going to be a new order. The old pureblood families are not going to be running the show anymore. I’m tired of it. I’m going to make sure that there are more Muggle borns controlling the upper level positions of the Ministry. I don’t want to ever see an administration like Fudge’s. One that values money and heritage more than the actual worth of people. It’s time that the old prejudices that have ruled the wizarding world for so long died.”

Dumbledore smiled and nodded, "That is a worthy goal. It may be one that you find impossible to accomplish, but the effort can only make the world better."

Harry laughed, "If my parents had known what I would accomplish in my life, they would have probably given me the middle name impossible. I have a knack for getting it done. This will just be one more link in the chain."

Dumbledore checked his watch, "The Order members will be here shortly. We should get ready."

Harry nodded, "I'll go get the others. I didn't tell them that we were having a meeting. They will want to be here for this. I'll be back in just a few minutes." Harry quickly strode through the castle towards the Gryffindor common room. He found Ginny, Ron, Hermione, and Neville sitting in the common room. "Come on, guys. We have an Order meeting." Ron, Hermione, and Ginny got up to follow Harry. Harry looked at Neville, "What are you waiting for?"

Neville's eyes widened, "Does that mean you want me to come to the Order meeting?"

Harry nodded, "Of course. If you can find Luna in the next few minutes, she should be there as well."

Neville jumped up, "She will be in the library. She's doing her homework."

Harry asked, "Why aren't you working with her?"

Neville grinned, "She says that she doesn't get enough work done when I'm around."

Harry chuckled as Neville raced through the portrait hole and down the corridor. Harry followed him towards the library with the others trailing behind him. They caught up as Neville came out of the library with Luna in tow. Luna asked, "What is going on?"

Harry smiled, "We're having an Order of the Phoenix meeting and I thought that you might like to be included in what is going on."

Luna nodded, "Let's go."

Harry led the way back to Dumbledore's office and the group walked up the stairs to find the rest of the Order assembled. Harry walked over to Frank, and held out his hand, "I'm glad that you could make it."

Frank grinned, "I wouldn't have missed this for the world. I'm ready to fight."

Harry took his place in front of everyone, "It is time to begin the meeting. I would like to say that I am glad to re-welcome the Longbottoms to the Order of the Phoenix. However, that is the end of the happy news. Albus, since you are the only one that seems to have read the newspaper articles, I will let you tell them what is going on."

Dumbledore cleared his throat as Harry took a seat, "It appears that Voldemort has begun to allow his Death Eaters to conduct raids on Muggles. There have been twenty-two Muggle deaths thus far. The Muggle newspapers have gotten a hold of the details behind the deaths, and have publicized pictures of the Dark Mark in the sky."

Arthur shook his head, "Fudge has been in a towering temper since the Prime Minister contacted him concerning it this morning."

Kingsley nodded, "Don't I know it. He came down to the Auror department and yelled at everyone. He said that if we didn't start doing our jobs properly that he would fire us all."

Harry snorted, "That's an empty threat if I ever heard one. He wouldn't have anyone to defend the Ministry if he got rid of all the Aurors. Cornelius just wants to yell at someone to make himself feel as if he's actually accomplishing something. It's pathetic really."

Dumbledore broke in, "While insulting Cornelius might give all of you some sort of gratification, we must return to the subject at hand. We must respond to this."

Harry grinned sheepishly, "Sorry. I guess I got a little carried away. The most sensible course of action is for us to put a team together and wait for them to attack again. Then, we wipe out the Death Eaters that are responsible. I have a feeling that this is just a diversion to keep our eyes off of what Voldemort is really up to."

Remus asked, "What is that?"

"We'll get to that in a minute. That was the reason that this meeting was called. We need to decide how to deal with the diversion first. Albus, you have access to data that I don't. Where do you think that the Death Eaters will strike next?"

Dumbledore shrugged, "I have not the slightest idea. The attacks appear random in nature to me."

Dawlish spoke up, "No, they actually aren't. If you correlate the locations of the attacks with the homes of known Death Eaters on a map, you will find that all of the attacks are happening to Muggles that are close to their homes. The only Muggle area that has not been attacked is the small village near the ancestral Malfoy estates."

Kingsley nodded, "We spent all afternoon working on this. The Malfoy estate is the best guess that we can come up with for the next attack."

Harry sighed, "If they are going to attack Muggles around the Malfoy estate, that means they will most likely gather there before the attack. That will be our target. Who wants to be on the raiding team?"

Kingsley replied, "You know I'm in."

Dawlish chimed in, "You can count on me, as well."

Frank twirled his wand, "I'm itching to hand out some punishment to some Death Eaters."

Neville stood up, "If my Dad is in, I'm going to."

Frank beamed with pride at his son, but Alice protested, "Neville, you are still too young."

Neville answered back fiercely, "I'm the same age as Harry. Besides this won't be the first time that I have gone head to head with Death Eaters. I'm ready. Harry is an excellent dueling instructor."

Ron jumped up, "You know I'm in."

The twins chorused, "We'll follow you anywhere, Harry."

Harry nodded, "That should be enough. Fred, George, everyone is going to need some Weasley bombs."

Fred grinned, "Don't worry we've got plenty."

George asked, "Do we need to bring any of the other items?"

Harry shook his head, "No, we shouldn't need anything other than the bombs."

Bill asked, "Don't you think you need a larger raiding party?"

Harry shrugged, "The more the merrier. If you want to join us, all you have to do is speak up, Bill."

Bill grinned, "I'm going."

Charlie said, "So am I."

Molly sighed, "Five of my children are running off into danger."

Ginny laughed, "I'm afraid that all six are running off into danger, Mum. Where Harry goes, I go."

Molly protested, "Ginny, you can't. You're not ready for a raid of this size."

Ginny pointed to Ron, Fred, and George, "I can beat those three in a duel. So, if they are ready, I am. I've already been Death Eater hunting with Harry."

Ron protested, "You haven't beaten me in a duel yet, Ginny."

"I will on Thursday." replied Ginny evenly.

McGonagall asked, "What are the two of you talking about?"

Harry answered for them, "They have challenged each other to a mock duel during the first dueling club meeting. Don't worry, Molly, I won't let them hurt each other."

Molly shook her head, "I guess I don't have much of a say in this matter, do I?"

Harry sighed, "Not anymore. We're not little kids that need to be protected anymore."

Remus interrupted, "Okay, now that that is settled, I want to know what you think the Dark Lord's true objective is."

Harry sighed, "Malfoy delivered a message to me as soon as I got off the train. Apparently Voldemort is going to attempt time travel."

Everyone gasped in surprise. Bill stammered, "Surely, he isn't that crazy."

Harry shook his head, "Do you really have to ask? Voldemort isn't crazy, but he is desperate. He knows that he can't beat me anymore. He's going to try the last thing he can think of. Defeating Dumbledore or myself in the past. Most likely Dumbledore."

Charlie asked, "Why Dumbledore?"

Harry shrugged, "I expect that he will still be hesitant to attack even my past self. He will be afraid that it will blow up in his face. If he kills a past version of Dumbledore, then there will be no one to protect me as a child. One of his minions would be able to kill me in the past, and all of Voldemort's problems would be solved."

Snape protested, "It could have other consequences that would be impossible to predict."

Harry nodded, "I know. So does he. However, he's willing to risk everything to defeat me. That makes him far more dangerous than he has ever been. The problem lies in the fact that if he goes back, then I will have to go back to stop him. Both of us being back in the same time period could be catastrophic. There are entirely too many things that could be altered by the two of us battling in the past. I have to find some way to make him return to the present once he goes back."

Arthur asked, "How are you going to do that?"

Harry sighed, and then shrugged, "I wish I knew."

Everyone left the meeting in disheartened spirits. They all had to carry away the forbidding knowledge that Harry didn't know how to stop Voldemort from traveling back in time.

The next morning, Harry walked down into the Great Hall to find Aurors stationed in the Great Hall. He gave Dumbledore an inquiring glance. Dumbledore motioned him to come up to the Head Table. Harry walked through the room and asked, "Why are they here?"

Dumbledore shrugged, "Dawlish and I decided that if Voldemort lures you back in time, then it is possible that his minions could attack the castle. We decided that it would be better to have some extra security around the castle. The students need all the protection we can muster."

Harry nodded, "Good. Having Aurors roaming around will keep our resident Death Eater in line for the most part. I hope."

Dumbledore smiled, "Don't worry. I have eyes watching young Mr. Malfoy. He won't be getting too far out of line."

"That's one less thing that I have to worry about. I will meet the others here right after dinner." said Harry.

Dumbledore nodded, "They will be here. I can only say good luck and happy hunting."

Harry walked back to the Gryffindor table and sat down to eat his breakfast. Ginny asked, "So, what do you have to do today?"

Harry grinned, "I have Herbology this morning, and Double Potions this afternoon."

Ron moaned, “Ugh. I’m glad I don’t have to deal with Snape anymore.”

Harry laughed, “I’m sure that Potions isn’t nearly as bad as you remember it. Professor Snape is much better than he used to be.”

Ron shook his head, “I’m still glad that I don’t have Potions anymore.”

Harry shrugged, “I guess.”

Hermione ignored the two boys and asked Ginny, “What classes do you have today, Ginny?”

Ginny checked her timetable, “I have Double Charms this morning, and then Defense Against the Dark Arts this afternoon.”

Harry finished eating, “Well, we might as well get to class.” He leaned down and pecked Ginny on the lips, “I’ll see you at lunch, dear.”

Harry headed away towards the greenhouses with Neville and Ron hot on his heels. The trio of Gryffindor boys reached greenhouse six, which their timetables had told them to report to. Madam Sprout came in, and said, “Hello, my students. Welcome to Greenhouse six.”

The class, which was composed of the three Gryffindor boys, and a few Hufflepuff girls including Hannah Abbott and Susan Bones, chorused back, “Good morning, Professor Sprout.”

Madam Sprout continued, “Obviously this is your final year at Hogwarts, and you will all be taking your N.E.W.T. in Herbology at the end of this year. The written portion of this test should not be terribly difficult to pass as long as you have done your homework. The practical portion of the test will involve dealing with multiple types of dangerous plants in a safe manner. We will begin with the first of these today. You will find one of each plant at each workstation. I have one for each of you. We are going to be pruning the Alboric Andromeda. These plants are hazardous due to their acidic secretions. You need to wear your dragonhide gloves while handling these plants.”

The group spent the morning period pruning the Andromeda plants. After they were done, Harry took off for the Head Boy bathroom to take a shower. Ron and Neville looked at each other and then laughed. Ron said, “I think that Ginny has got him whipped.”

Neville smirked, “I think Hermione and Luna have us whipped, too. We don’t have much room to talk.”

Ron nodded, “True. Chess?”

Neville nodded, “Sure. I’ll let you build your ego up.”

Ron shook his head, “I just like to play.”

Neville snorted, “Sure you do.”

The two of them continued to joke all the way to Gryffindor tower.

Later, at lunch everyone gathered around the table. Hermione said, “I want to go ahead and say this now, just in case I don’t have another opportunity. I want all of you to be very careful tonight. You all need to come back safely.”

Ginny smiled, “Don’t worry, Hermione. Harry will keep an eye on everyone, I’m sure.”

Harry nodded, “Ginny’s right, Hermione. You don’t have to worry. Everyone will be fine. We’ve got the Weasley bombs, and the element of surprise. We should be able to take them without much of a fight. I’m not going to bind them with a Disapparation Jinx, so they will be able to run once they realize that they are beaten. I’m not really worried about catching them all. We just want to give them a bloody nose tonight, so to speak.”

Hermione sighed, “I would like to go with you, but I don’t know how much good I will be.”

Ron laid a hand on her shoulder, “Don’t take this the wrong way, Hermione, but I’m really glad that you are not going. That way I don’t have to worry about you.”

Hermione responded, "But, I have to sit here and worry about you."

Luna smiled, "If it will make you feel better, Hermione, we can sit and worry together until they get back."

Hermione smiled back at Luna, "I'd like that."

Harry clapped his hands together, "Now, that that is settled, let's eat lunch. I'm going to need all the strength I can muster to get through Double Potions."

Hermione laughed, "It won't be that bad."

Harry shrugged, "I know it won't be that bad, but it will be long."

Everyone laughed, and then settled down to their lunch. After they finished, Harry kissed Ginny lightly, and said, "I'll meet you after class, love."

Ginny kissed him again, "I know. Bye."

Harry and Hermione headed down to the dungeons for Potions class. They sat at the front and waited for Snape's customary entrance. A few moments later Snape swept in with his robes billowing behind him. "Welcome to the final year of N.E.W.T. Potions. We will be brewing potions that appear quite frequently on the Potions N.E.W.T. I expect a high level of passing from all of my students, and I have yet to be disappointed in eighteen years. The first potion that we will be brewing this term is a truth potion."

Hermione raised her hand, "Will we be brewing Veritaserum?"

Snape shook his head, "No, Miss Granger, we will not. Veritaserum is too expensive a potion to brew in a classroom setting. We will be brewing a much weaker truth potion that can be used to verify information that you receive from another source quite easily. This potion is called the Truth Telling Potion because anyone who ingests it is incapable of telling a lie for the next several hours. They will feel no compulsion to answer your questions like with Veritaserum, but they will be unable to lie if they do answer the question."

Padma Patil asked, "How does that help you to verify information?"

Snape turned to Harry, "Mr. Potter, would you like to field this question?"

Harry nodded, "Padma, it is quite obvious that if you ask them a question, and they refuse to answer, then the information you have is most likely correct. If possible, they will tell you a lie, but since this potion makes that impossible, then they will have to merely stay silent, which only confirms what you know. It isn't foolproof because if they are extremely clever then they will refuse to answer the question even if what you want to know is wrong. However, most criminals that are stupid enough to get caught are not that intelligent."

Snape said, "Excellent response, Mr. Potter. Ten points to Gryffindor." Everyone in the room froze in shock except for Harry, who had already begun to unpack his potion ingredients. None of the others had ever seen Snape give points to Gryffindor, let alone Harry Potter. Snape swept his gaze over the rest of the class, "Well, what are you waiting for? Get out your things." Snape pointed his wand at the blackboard, and the ingredients and instructions for the potion appeared. "You may begin."

The students rapidly went to work. Harry was the first to finish his potion. He corked a flask of it for marking, and then took it up to Snape. Snape nodded to him as Harry returned to his desk to clean up. Shortly thereafter, the bell rang to signal the end of class, and Harry and Hermione hurried out. Hermione waited until they were out of earshot of the other students, "Harry, I can't believe that Snape gave you points in front of the Slytherins."

Harry grinned, "Well, Snape isn't going to show much favoritism to his own house for awhile. He knows that Malfoy has taken the Dark Mark, and that several of them despise him for being a traitor to Voldemort. He isn't happy with them at the moment. Once the Death Eater students leave, he will probably be back to his old ways, just not as sadistic about it. He's actually an excellent professor. He knows the subject matter, and he certainly knows how to keep a class attentive."

Hermione laughed at him, "If somebody had told me that you would be complimenting Snape two years ago, I would have told them they were crazy. Now, I'm hearing it first hand and I'm still not quite sure that I believe it."

Harry shook his head in silent amusement, "Believe it. We need to find the others. Never mind, there they are." Ginny, Ron, Neville, and Luna were walking towards the two of them. Harry said, "Let's go to the Room of Requirement, and get our homework done. We need to finish early since several of us have other matters to attend to after dinner."

Ron nodded, "Good idea, mate. We can have some privacy in the Room of Requirement."

Harry led the way, and the group settled down around an extremely large table to do all their homework. Harry and Ginny finished theirs quickly, and then started helping the others. Ginny pointed out a few flaws in Hermione's calculations for Arithmancy from over her shoulder. Hermione looked at her in amazement, "How did you know how to do that? You didn't take Arithmancy."

Ginny pointed at Harry, "I learned it from him."

Hermione turned to Harry, "How did you know how to do it?"

Harry shrugged, "Merlin is a brilliant man."

Hermione asked, "What?"

Harry shook his head, "I don't have time to explain right now, but I promise I will tell you all what I have been doing after tonight's mission is over with. I have informed Dumbledore of what I have been up to, but no one else knows yet."

Ron asked, "Not even Ginny?"

Ginny shook her head, "No, I knew that he had been learning things from somewhere, because he has been imparting the knowledge to me through our Soul Bond, but up till now he has been hiding the source of the information from me."

Harry chuckled, "Don't worry, we will all have a nice long discussion about it tomorrow." Harry looked at his watch, "Well, it is almost time for dinner. I guess we should go down to the Great Hall."

Ron jumped up, "Let's hit it. I'm ready to eat."

Hermione commented dryly, "You're always ready to eat." Everyone else laughed as Ron mock angrily stormed out the door. Hermione followed him out and asked playfully, "Did ickle Ronniekins get his feelings hurt?"

Ron stuck his tongue out at Hermione, and then pulled her into a kiss. Harry turned and raised his eyebrows at Ginny. She smiled, "I guess he must be learning. If he keeps at it, he'll start talking like you."

Harry made a weird face, "I hope not. If he starts talking to Hermione the way that I talk to you, I might gag."

Hermione broke the kiss with Ron and hit Harry on the arm, "What would be wrong with Ron being sweet and romantic?"

Harry shrugged, "Nothing. I just don't want him to do it in front of me. You're kind of like my sister, Hermione, and that is just gross."

Ron put his hands out in front of him, "Finally, he knows how I feel when I have to watch him snog my sister."

Ginny looked pointedly at Ron, "You don't have to watch you know. You could just walk away."

Ron looked pointedly right back at her, "You don't have to start kissing right in front of me either."

Harry tapped Ginny on the shoulder, "I hate to admit it, Gin, but the man does have a point. We flaunt our relationship just a little bit."

Ginny put her hands on her hips, “We should. All of the boys have been teasing me about having a crush on you since I was a little girl. Now, that I actually have you, I need to rub it in their face.”

Harry gave a mock offended look, “Oh, I see. I’m just a prize that you had to win so you could get back at your brothers. I feel so used.”

Ron, Neville, Hermione, and Luna broke down laughing. Ginny looked horrified by what she had said. “I didn’t mean it like that, Harry!” she exclaimed.

Harry grinned, “I know. I was just trying to see what kind of reaction I could get out of you. Now, let’s go eat. I’m even getting hungry now.”

They went down to dinner and ate hurriedly. Once they were finished, and everyone else started to file slowly out of the Great Hall, they went up to the Head Table, where Fred, George, and Bill had come in. Dawlish and Kingsley were already at the castle on Auror duty. Frank walked in a minute later, followed shortly by Charlie. Harry clapped his hands together, “I guess that is all of us. Fred, George, did you bring the items that we discussed?”

The twins nodded, “We have them right here.” The two of them held up the bags that they were carrying.

Harry smiled, “Excellent. Now, I have arranged a Portkey for us to go. He held up a large book. Everyone put a finger on, and we will get out of here.”

Dawlish asked, “Where is the Portkey going to take us?”

Harry answered, “About a mile from the Malfoy estate. We will have to walk the rest of the way. I didn’t want us to be too close.”

Neville kissed Luna goodbye, while Ron did the same to Hermione. Hermione told all of them, “Be careful.”

Harry replied, “I’ll say it again, Hermione. Don’t worry.” The strike team all put a finger on the Portkey and suddenly they were gone. When they popped back into existence. Harry dropped the book and it disappeared.

Ron asked, “Where did it go?”

Harry grinned, “Don’t worry. I can summon it to me at will. I’m going to become invisible and check the situation out. That way we can come up with the most effective strategy for taking them. I’ll be back in just a minute. All of you stay hidden.” Harry disappeared from view.

Frank shook his head in amazement, “There isn’t a wizard alive that wouldn’t pay good money to be half as talented as that young man.”

Kingsley nodded, “I know what you mean, Frank. He has changed so much in such a short time. I remember not too long ago, when he needed us to protect him. Now, he’s the leader of the Order. It just goes to show you that time can change everything.”

Frank looked at Kingsley curiously, “Considering that we were discussing the altering of time at the last Order meeting, that statement can mean a whole lot more than you intended it to.”

Dawlish sighed, “Don’t we all know it. All we can do is hope that Harry figures out some way to stop him.”

Harry reappeared in front of them. “Okay, there are about fifteen of them in the house. There are two standing out front as guards.”

Dawlish asked, “Could you tell which ones they were?”

Harry shook his head, “No, they already have their masks on. They are getting ready to go out and attack. Here is what we are going to do. I’m going to go invisible again, and take out the two guards. I want Fred, George, Bill, Charlie, and Frank to be standing by with Weasley bombs. Hurl them through the front window. That should create plenty of confusion. Everyone else, be ready to throw Stunning Spells in after the bombs go off. We should nail a few of them that way. After that, all of you take cover, and continue to throw hexes into the house. Neville and Ron, I want the two of you watching our backs. Make sure that none of the Death Eaters go out the back of the house and try to flank us. That means that the two of you need to get up into the trees.”

Neville asked, “What do we do if we see someone.”

“Stun them.” replied Harry.

Ron asked, “What if we can’t?”

Harry chuckled, “Make a whole lot of noise. Everyone knows their jobs. Let’s go.”

Harry disappeared again and walked back towards the house. Things were just as he left them. The Death Eaters were still standing around in the sitting room. Either they were waiting for someone or a certain time. Harry quickly stunned the two guards. As soon as Fred and George saw the guards drop, they ignited their Weasley bombs and hurled them through the window. The glass shattered, and the other three bombs followed the first two in quickly. Stunning Spells followed directly behind the Explosion of minor hexes. Harry became visible again and leaped through the window behind the Stunning Spells. The Death Eaters scattered all over the vast room. Several of them began hurling hexes out the window. Others aimed at Harry.

One of the Death Eaters screeched upon recognizing Harry, “It’s Potter.”

Another Death Eater laughed mockingly, “Has the wee baby Potter come back to play?”

Harry spun at the sound of Bellatrix’s voice. He smiled evilly, “Bellatrix, I will enjoy killing you.” Harry raised his arm and pointed a finger at Bellatrix, “Avada Kedavra.” The green jet of light sped towards her. Bellatrix Apparated away as soon as she heard him speak the words of the spell. The spell harmlessly splashed into the wall. By this point, several curses had hit Harry with no effect.

Three Death Eaters decided to try killing him and hurled Killing Curses at him. Harry heard three distinct voices yell, “Avada Kedavra.”

He spun to locate the spells and saw all three jets of green light hurtling at him. Harry waved his arm around in a circle and said calmly, “Dissipato.” The jets of light vanished in mid-air several feet away from Harry. Harry followed this with an Explosion Hex aimed back at the three Death Eaters. They were blasted away as several pieces of furniture were hurled around the room. Harry extended his other hand, and said, “Stupefy.” A jet of red light emerged from each of his four fingers. Two of them caught Death Eaters and dropped them where they stood.

Another Death Eater screamed, “Retreat.” With a series of pops the remaining Death Eaters Apparated away.

Harry surveyed the destruction of the room that he was in, and sighed, “You can all come in now. It’s safe.” The rest of the strike team entered the sitting room. Bill and Charlie were dragging the two stunned guards with them.

Dawlish glanced around and asked, “How many did we get?”

Kingsley appeared to be counting, “It looks like six stunned Death Eaters, and three mangled ones. Frank was kneeling over the three that had been hit with the Explosion Hex. Kingsley asked, “Are any of those three alive?”

Frank nodded, “Yes. One of them has a broken neck. He’s dead. The other two are alive for the moment. They won’t stay that way if we don’t get some medi-witches in here, fast.”

Harry sighed, "Don't bother with medi-witches. I'll take care of it. Harry flicked his wrist, and the two Death Eaters were healed. Then, he said, "Stupefy." Two Stunning Spells flashed across the room, and hit the two Death Eaters."

Dawlish smiled as he continued to look around, "We got nine of them. This is encouraging. They will think twice about attacking any more innocent bystanders."

Harry growled, "Bellatrix got away, though."

Frank stood up and walked over to Harry. He clapped a hand on his shoulder, "Don't worry, Harry. We'll get her one of these days."

Harry nodded, "Yes, we will."

9. Dueling Club Begins

The next morning Harry sat down to breakfast with his friends. They all looked at him expectantly. Harry sighed, "After class, we will go to the Room of Requirement, and I will explain exactly what is going on."

The rest of them began eating once Harry said this. Ginny asked, "So, what do the Professors have in store for you today?"

Harry chuckled, "We get to go back to Flitwick for Double Charms this morning, and we have Transfiguration this afternoon."

Ron sighed, "Sounds like a fun day. I don't have a class this afternoon."

Neville laughed, "Lucky. I've got Ancient Runes this afternoon."

Ginny said, "Hey, I like Ancient Runes."

Neville said back to her, "So do I. It would still be nice to have a free period every now and then."

Harry nodded, "I agree with that. The two of us may be teaching here next year. We really won't have free periods, then."

Neville sighed, "I know. I think that I will enjoy teaching."

Hermione nodded, "You will."

The troop of students went their separate ways to go to class. Everyone besides Harry was having a great amount of difficulty paying attention in class due to the anticipation of what they would be hearing this afternoon from Harry. Finally the last class of the day was over and the six students made their way to the seventh floor corridor containing the Room of Requirement. Three sweeps back and forth in front of the stretch of wall that hid the entrance and they were inside the room. They all sat down on chairs and couches. Hermione said, "We're waiting."

Harry took a deep breath, "This summer I went up to the portrait room in Potter Manor, and began talking to the portraits."

Ginny smiled, "So you talked to your Mum and Dad."

Harry nodded, "Among others. I can remember the conversation like it was yesterday."

Harry walked into the portrait room and cleared his throat to wake the portraits. James was the first to open his eyes. "Harry. I've been waiting for you to come see us."

By now Lily was awake as well, "You have turned out to be such a handsome young man."

Harry grinned slightly in embarrassment, "I guess, Mum."

James cackled, "I can't say that he acts much like I did at that age. What do you think, Lily?"

Lily shook her head, "Definitely not. If someone had given you a compliment like that you would have mussed your hair and tried to check your profile."

James shrugged, "Hey, I was young."

Lily replied, "So is he."

Harry asked, "Do I need to be here for this conversation, or would the two of you like to be alone?"

James laughed, "Of course not, Harry. We want you to sit and talk with us. We have been waiting to hear all about your life for a very long time."

Harry said, "Okay, here goes."

Harry continued the story, "That was our first conversation. I told them everything that had happened to me through my life. They were impressed to say the least. My Dad kept saying, 'That's my boy.'"

Ginny smiled, "I'm so glad that you talked to them. I hope I have a chance to."

Harry chuckled, "I'm sure you will. We will be living in the house with their portraits."

Ginny nodded, "Good point."

Hermione interrupted, "I'm really glad that you got to talk to your parents, Harry, but that still doesn't explain why you said that Merlin was a brilliant man."

Harry sighed, "To continue the story, the second time that I went to talk with them, they told me about the portrait of Godric Gryffindor that is hidden in a secret chamber in the basement of Potter Manor. From Godric, I learned where Merlin's only existing portrait is. I went there to learn from him."

Ron asked, "How could you have had time, Harry? You were with us practically all summer."

Harry nodded, "I know, but time is no longer an issue for me. I would just pop back in time a few hours. That left me with plenty of time to study, and still made it so that I never really seemed to have been missing for more than a few minutes. Hermione is going to be jealous, but I read practically the entire Hogwarts library this summer."

Hermione pouted, "That's not fair. I've been trying to read that library for years."

Harry laughed, "It's going to take several more years for you to do it. I know it did me, and I read fast."

Neville said, "I don't get something. If you have spent years reading the library and studying with Merlin, how come you don't look any older?"

Harry replied, "The beauty of being out of the normal flow of time is that you don't age. I can spend as much time in the past as I would like, and I don't get any older."

Hermione protested, "That doesn't make sense. I studied time travel spells while I had the Time Turner, and they don't remove you from the normal flow of time. They just deposit you at some other point. Once you arrive, time flows just as it did."

Harry nodded, "Very astute observation, Hermione. You would be right if I used time travel spells to move through time. However, I don't. I merely have to will myself through time."

Luna asked, "How do you do that?"

Harry returned, "Do you know how you breathe?"

Luna shook her head, "No, I just do it."

"Same concept. I don't know how that I am able to move through time so easily. I just know that I can do it."

Ron threw his hands up into the air, "That's it. I don't want to hear anymore of this weird stuff. If I do, my head is going to explode."

Neville pointed at Ron, "I'm with him. You could spend the next ten years trying to explain all of this to me, and I still wouldn't get it."

Hermione appeared as if she were going to protest, but Harry cut her off, "Drop it for now, Hermione. If you want to ask me some more questions concerning the theory behind time travel, then let it wait until some other time."

Hermione sighed, "Okay." Then, she picked up a book, and was immersed in the text within moments.

Ron chuckled, "I wish that I could get her to pay as much attention to things that are fun as she does to those books."

Harry chuckled with him, "To Hermione, Ron, books are fun."

The group finished their homework and then went down to the Great Hall for dinner. After dinner they all returned to the Room of Requirement to sit around the fire and enjoy some leisure time as couples. Once it was time for bed the prefects made their rounds, and the group trooped off to the dormitories to go to sleep. They paused for a quick kiss goodnight, and then it was off to bed.

The next day seemed to disappear as quickly as it began. Classes were over and it was time for the first dueling club meeting of the term.

Harry climbed up onto the stage, "Welcome to the dueling club. I hope all of you have been practicing your swordplay over the summer. We are going to be beginning tonight's lesson with an exhibition duel between two of our members. Ron, Ginny, get up here."

Ginny leaped onto the stage agilely. Ron followed more slowly. Tonks asked, "Mr. Potter, what exactly are the terms for this duel?"

Harry replied, "We will be handling it much the same way that we did the mock duels last year. You will be the judge of sword wounds. If a mortal wound is called, then the duel is over. If one of them manages to stun or bind the other, then the duel is over. You may begin."

Ginny and Ron both drew their swords and wands. Ginny smiled across at Ron, "I hope you are ready to lose to your baby sister."

Ron assumed a stance, and said, "We'll see, Gin. We'll see."

While they were preparing themselves, Harry heard several people enter the room. He looked over his shoulder to see the Aurors moving in through the door. He asked, "Tonks, why are the Aurors here?"

Tonks grinned, "It seems that you have been making quite a name for this dueling club. They came down to see what all the fuss was about."

While this was occurring the duel on the stage had begun in earnest. Ginny was laying back and forth with her sword, throwing Tickling Charms between each swing."

Ron was totally on the defensive. It was all he could do to avoid being hit. Tonks nodded in approval, "Miss Weasley is impressive. By the way the Aurors are gawking, I would say that they would agree."

Harry chuckled, "What can I say, she is my best pupil."

The fight continued for another few moments before Ginny decide to have mercy on Ron, and end it. She quickly struck his sword from his grasp, and kicked his wand from his hand. He dove to pick it up and she neatly caught him with a Stunning Spell. Harry stepped up onto the stage. He summoned Ron's wand and sword to his hands. "Enervate." With a casual waggle of a finger, Harry restored Ron. He held out the weapons, "I believe that you have been defeated, Mr. Weasley."

Ron huffed, "I know."

Ginny smiled, "I warned you. You should have listened."

Harry turned back to the crowd, "Let's have a round of applause for our combatants." Applause rose from the surrounding dueling club members. "Now, let's see if you have improved with your swordplay over the summer. Anthony Goldstein, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Ernie MacMillan, Terry Boot, Colin Creevey, and Neville Longbottom, get up here." Harry turned to Ron and Ginny, "The two of you can get off the stage, now. They will need it."

Ron and Ginny stepped off the stage into the crowd. The other boys got up onto the stage holding their wands and swords at the ready. They immediately surrounded Harry. Harry chuckled, "Don't worry, gentlemen. You won't be dueling me. I wouldn't put you through that kind of torture." The group of guys sighed in relief. Harry grinned, "You will be dueling each other. It will be teams of three on three. Terry, Colin, and Neville, I want you to team up against Justin, Ernie, and Anthony. Swords only. I think that this should be interesting. You may begin when I leave the stage." Harry gave the two groups of boys a moment to huddle together and plan strategy. Then, he lightly dropped off the stage onto the floor.

The six boys on the stage immediately went into action. Terry and Colin split to each side from Neville, who charged straight at the other group with his sword whirling in front of him. Ernie and Anthony dropped back from the onslaught to flank Neville, while Justin met the charge head on and locked swords with Neville. Within moments, Justin's sword was flying through the air towards Ernie, who sidestepped it quickly. Neville swiped at Justin undefended, and then kicked his legs out from under him. Anthony jumped forward to allow Justin to scramble after his sword, but in so doing, he exposed his back to Colin, who quickly took advantage of the mistake, and struck him a blow to the back of the neck. Tonks called out, "Mortal wound, Mr. Goldstein." Anthony jumped from the stage. Ernie had attempted to attack Neville's exposed flank, but had been stopped by Terry. Terry and Ernie continued to battle back and forth as Colin and Neville advanced on Justin, who had by now retrieved his sword.

During all this action, one of the Aurors had walked forward to stand by Harry, "You have done an excellent job of training these young men, Mr. Potter."

Harry replied without ever taking his eyes off the duel as it progressed, "They have learned well."

The duel continued as Justin was doing his best to stave off Neville and Colin, until hopefully Ernie could defeat Terry. It appeared that this might actually happen as Ernie managed to knock Terry's sword from his hands. At the moment this happened, Colin did a back flip away from Justin, while Neville dove sideways and slammed bodily into Ernie, driving him to the ground. Terry grabbed his sword and scored a blow to Ernie's chest as he attempted to regain his feet while Neville rolled off of him. Tonks called out again, "Mortal Blow, Mr. MacMillan."

Colin continued to fight defensively until Terry and Neville came to his aid. Justin paused and threw down his sword. He said, "I give up. There is no way that I can take all three of them."

Harry began clapping, "Excellent swordsmanship, gentlemen. I have rarely seen such a fine display, and judging by the silence that seems to be pervading the room, neither has anyone else." Harry leaped onto the stage, "Neville, those were some extremely reckless maneuvers that you were trying."

Neville shrugged, "I just did what I had to. I figured that being direct and aggressive was the best course of action. It seemed to do the trick."

Harry nodded, "I'm a fan of direct action myself, Neville. The key to true strategy is knowing when direct action will work, and when its time to be devious. Both types of attack are necessary at some time or another. I want to congratulate all of you on an excellent display once more. Now, onto actual business.."

The Auror that had spoken to Harry earlier interrupted, "My apologies for interrupting, Mr. Potter. My name is Kevin Whitby. I'm one of the senior Aurors, and all of us have heard of your skill in dueling. I would like to see a taste of it."

Harry chuckled, "I would certainly like to oblige you, Mr. Whitby, but I don't really think anyone wants to duel with me. It isn't exactly fair."

Kevin opened his eyes wide at the boast, "That seems to be a little bit arrogant, Mr. Potter."

Harry shook his head, "It isn't arrogance. I'm immune to most hexes and jinxes. It isn't fair when I can stand and take anything that you can throw at me. All I have to do is catch my opponent with a single stunner."

Another of the Aurors asked, "What do you mean you are immune to hexes?"

Harry answered, "Try hitting me with one, and find out first hand."

The Auror drew his wand and said, "Locomotor Mortis." Harry stood calmly and waited for the curse to hit him. It did and nothing happened. The Auror tried again, "Petrificus Totalus." Again Harry stood still and waited for the curse. Yet, again it did nothing when it hit.

Harry shrugged, "Do you see what I mean? Normal curses don't have any effect on me."

Whitby asked, "How did you accomplish this?"

Harry shrugged again, "I have not the slightest idea. I just merely know that curses do not affect me."

Whitby seemed as if he was about to speak again, but he was interrupted by Dawlish, who had just walked into the room, "That's enough, Whitby. I believe that you have asked Mr. Potter enough questions." Whitby nodded in response.

Harry chuckled at the eager expressions that were plastered on every face in the room. Everyone seemed like they wanted answers to Harry's mysterious powers. "I believe that is time to end the Dueling Club meeting for the evening. You are all dismissed."

Everyone grumbled good naturedly as they filed out of the room. Harry dropped from the stage to stand beside Ginny, who was waiting for him. Ron, Hermione, Neville, and Luna weren't far away. "Let's head to dinner. I'm hungry."

Ron laughed, "I thought that was supposed to be my line."

Neville slapped Ron on the back, "It usually is. That doesn't mean that everyone else can't steal it once and awhile." The group of students continued to banter as they walked down to the Great Hall.

The rest of the evening, and Friday passed by quickly. On Friday afternoon after class, Harry met Ron, Hermione, and Ginny. "Are the two of you ready for Animagus practice?" asked Harry.

Ron and Hermione nodded enthusiastically. Harry turned to Ginny, "Are you going to help?"

Ginny smiled, "Of course. You can use me as a test subject."

Harry laughed, "I suppose. It will be helpful to let you transform in front of them, so that I can still talk and explain."

The four Gryffindors went to the Room of Requirement to practice. After they had been practicing for a little while, Ron actually managed to transform his hand into a bear paw. Harry said excitedly, "That's great, Ron. I take it that you plan on becoming a bear."

Ron nodded, "I like the idea of the raw power that a bear can wield."

Harry turned to Hermione, "Have you decided what animal you are aiming for?"

Hermione answered, "Yes. I want to be a lynx."

Harry smiled, "McGonagall will be pleased. She will like the idea of you being a fellow feline, considering you are her favorite student."

Hermione protested, "I'm not her favorite student." The other three Gryffindors snorted in derision. Hermione relented, "Okay, maybe I am her favorite student."

The rest of the weekend was spent working on the Animagus training and the student's homework. Monday's dueling meeting went over without a hitch, and finally it was time for Gryffindor's Quidditch tryouts. Ron took a deep breath and looked at Harry, "Are you sure that you want to give up the captain's seat?"

Harry chuckled, "I wouldn't have done it if I wasn't sure. Get out there and run a tryout."

Ron grinned, "Alright. Ron stepped out onto the pitch and looked at the sea of students that were there to either tryout or watch the tryout." Ron tapped his wand to his throat and said, "Sonorus. Welcome, everyone. I would like all of you to divide up depending on which position you are trying out for." He pointed to the opposite end of the pitch. "Chaser tryouts down there. Beater tryouts stay at this end." He tapped his wand to his throat again, "Quietus."

Harry walked up beside him, "Not bad, mate."

Ron returned graciously, "I had a good example to watch last year."

Harry chuckled, "I suppose. Now, let's see what these new kids can do."

Ron nodded, "You bet."

The practice went on for about an hour, before Ron called a halt. He amplified his voice again, and said, "Thank you, everyone. I will be posting the results of the tryout by tomorrow morning." He returned to his normal speaking voice, and landed to talk to the others. "Let's discuss the prospects over dinner. I'm starved." The rest of the team followed Ron into the changing rooms and then onward to the Great Hall for dinner.

The Gryffindor Quidditch team sat down around the house table, and began serving themselves. Ron was the first to speak, "Okay, guys, any suggestions?"

Harry nodded immediately, "I don't know about the Chasers, but I think we need to go with Evan Dobbs as one of the reserve beaters." Harry turned to Natalie, "He's your cousin isn't he?"

Natalie nodded, "Yes, he's been practicing since the tryouts last year. He watched everyone play, and decided that he wanted to be on the team."

Ron agreed readily, "Yeah, I was watching him as well. He has got some skills. He will be a good starter next year. How about the other reserve beater?"

Dean spoke up, "I don't know how the rest of you feel, but we have to go with Steven Tierman. He was brilliant."

Seamus nodded, "I agree. He will really help out the team. I think that he is probably better than Dean and I."

Ginny laughed, "I don't know about that. The two of you have got more game experience. We will just have to see how he does in practice. I think that it is obvious that Colin is moving up to the starting team. The question is who is going to replace him on the reserve team?"

Natalie spoke up, "I vote for Lacy Speret. She's only a second year, but she has got some real moves. She's fast."

Ron asked, "How is everyone on that?" The rest of the team nodded an affirmative. Ron slapped the table, "That settles it then. We have our new roster." He turned to his girlfriend, "Hermione, will you write up the roster for me. You know my handwriting is terrible."

Hermione giggled, "Of course. I'll do it as soon as we get back to the common room. Then, you can post it after the rest of them go to bed."

Ron smiled, "Thanks. Now, let's eat." They all tucked into their dinner.

Later that night, once everyone else had gone to bed, Ron posted the team roster, and the rest of the tower awoke the next morning to find the roster on the bulletin board.

The Gryffindor Quidditch Team

Starters

Position Player

Seeker Harry Potter

Keeper Ron Weasley

Beater Dean Thomas

Beater Seamus Finnigan

Chaser Ginny Weasley

Chaser Natalie McDonald

Chaser Colin Creevey

Reserves

Position Player

Seeker Ginny Weasley

Keeper Euan Abercrombie

Beater Evan Dobbs

Beater Steven Tierman

Chaser Emma Dobbs

Chaser Dennis Creevey

Chaser Lacy Speret

Harry and Ron stood off from the group of students that were crowded around the bulletin board. Harry smiled, "I think that you have made a few people very happy, and a whole lot of people extremely unhappy."

Ron shrugged, "That's always the problem with having to choose people for something. Someone is always left out."

Harry nodded, "Sage words. Let's go get breakfast before we get mobbed by the hopefuls."

Ron laughed, "Good idea." The two boys beat a hasty retreat from the common room before anyone noticed their presence.

10. Conversation with Centaurs

After classes were over the next day, Harry decided to walk down to visit Hagrid. When he arrived at Hagrid's cabin, he found that Hagrid already had a visitor. Firenze was standing in Hagrid's hut. Harry stood in the open doorway, and coughed to gain their attention.

They both looked over at him. Hagrid grinned, "Ah, Arry, we were jus talkin bout you. We wer goin to com an get ye from the castle."

Harry asked, "Why?"

Firenze was the one to answer the question, "Magorian wishes to speak with you, Mr. Potter. It is concerning the signs that the centaurs have read in the sky."

Harry raised his eyebrows in surprise, "Are the centaurs actually going to impart the knowledge they gain from the heavens unto humans?"

Firenze nodded, "They feel that it is in their best interests to do so this time. They have agreed with me, and I have been reaccepted into the herd."

Harry nodded, "Let's go, then."

Firenze turned and cantered from the hut, "I will lead the way."

Hagrid picked up his crossbow, and motioned for Harry to follow Firenze. Hagrid came just behind him. The party of three made their way into the Forbidden Forest, and after about thirty minutes of traveling, they came to a large clearing that was filled with centaurs. Magorian stepped forward out of the throng, "Mr. Potter, we are pleased that you have decided to join us. We have much to discuss." Magorian turned to the gathered centaurs, "Welcome, the Promised One, my people. The time of Prophecy and Reckoning is at hand." The centaurs cheered.

Harry asked, "What have you read in the stars, Magorian? In case you have forgotten, I have other things that I need to do."

Firenze cautioned, "Patience, Mr. Potter. All will be revealed in time."

Harry heard the ominous note that was present in Firenze's voice when he spoke the word time. He was about to ask what he meant by it, when Magorian began speaking again, "Mr. Potter, as I'm sure that you have been told by Firenze, the stars have shown that the period of peace that was recently ended was merely a pause between two great wars. The end of the second war is nigh, since Mars continues to grow brighter and brighter. The only thing that remains is for the battle through time, and the final battle."

Harry asked, "Battle through time?"

Magorian nodded, "Yes, Mr. Potter, we have foretold for ages that the final great villain and the Promised One would conduct their battles through the vortex of time."

Harry sighed, "So, that means Voldemort is going to attempt to go back and alter time. I suspected it."

Magorian continued, "The victor of that battle will control the fate of the world. When the time comes for the final battle, we centaur have decided that you are worthy. We will fight alongside you, Mr. Potter."

Harry bowed, "I am grateful that you have decided to aid me. I'm sure that the side of light will need all the help it can get. Now, if you have no other information for me, I must return to the castle. The Order of the Phoenix has much to plan."

Most of the centaurs bowed to Harry as he transformed into a phoenix and took wing towards the castle.

Harry flew in one of the windows of the castle, and landed on the floor. He transformed back into his human form and ran as fast as his legs could carry him to Dumbledore's office. He gasped out the password to the gargoyle, and raced up the stairs. Albus looked up as Harry burst into the room, "Harry, what is it?"

Harry said, "We have a problem. I have just had a conversation with the centaurs, and they have informed me that Voldemort is going to attempt to alter time."

Dumbledore sighed, "He really is getting desperate if he is going to risk time travel."

Harry nodded, "I know. I am going to have to be ready to go at a moment's notice. I just hope that I am going to be able to track him through time."

Dumbledore said, "I'm sure you will be. I take it that you want to have an Order meeting."

Harry replied, "I think that would be best. Everyone needs to know what is going on, and what to watch for. If we get wind of where he is attempting the time travel spell at, maybe we can stop him before he completes it."

Dumbledore said, "I will summon the Order to meet after dinner."

"Okay. I'll bring Ginny, Hermione, Ron, Luna, and Neville. I'll see you in a short while." said Harry as he turned to leave the office. He walked down to the Great Hall to wait for his friends. A few minutes later they walked down to join him. Harry smiled at them, "I hope all of you finished your homework this afternoon."

Ginny asked, "Why?"

"We have an Order meeting after dinner. I have obtained some critical information." replied Harry.

Ron said, "Well, then we are going to need plenty of energy. It's time to eat."

Hermione snorted as the rest of the group laughed, "Trust Ron to use any excuse to eat."

Ron protested, "I don't use any excuse. There are several that I have never used."

Hermione asked, "Like what?"

Ron shrugged, "I have never said that I needed to eat because wild elephants were about to trample me."

Harry started to chuckle, "I have to give you that one, Ron. Hermione, I believe that you have lost this round."

Hermione harrumphed, and then flounced off into the Great Hall. Ron raised his arms over his head in triumph, "I won."

Harry shook his head, "No, you didn't. You will have to let her win, or you will remain in the dog house for awhile."

Ron dropped his arms, "I suppose you're right. Let's just go eat. I'll fix this with her later."

After dinner, the group of friends walked up to Dumbledore's office to find most of the Order assembled. They were merely waiting for the professors. Harry and the rest found seats and exchanged greetings with the other members. A few minutes later, Dumbledore entered the room followed quickly by Snape, Tonks, and McGonagall. Once everyone was seated, Harry rose, "I guess all of you are wondering why you were summoned."

Dawlish nodded, "I would say so. This one was a little sudden."

Moody broke in gruffly, "Which means that something has happened. So, what is it?"

Harry sighed, "The centaurs have informed me that Voldemort will attempt to alter time."

The entire room save Dumbledore gasped in surprise. Arthur said quietly, "You have got to be kidding."

Harry shook his head, "I assure you that I am not. We have suspected that he might attempt it for awhile. Now, we know."

Snape asked, "What are our options?"

Harry motioned to Dawlish, "We are going to need the Aurors to be watching Death Eater activity as closely as possible. I would like to be able to prevent him from going. I don't expect us to actually be able to stop him, but perhaps we can delay him."

Dawlish said, "I will alert all the Aurors to be monitoring activity that would suggest that You-Know-Who is preparing to cast a complicated spell of that nature."

Harry clasped his hands together, "Now, we need to be able to discuss this in front of other people without them knowing what we are discussing."

Ron asked, "How are we going to do that?"

Hermione stated the obvious, "We are going to have to develop a code."

Harry nodded, "If I sense that Voldemort has cast the spell, then I will say that I have to go gallivanting. That way, whoever is around me can take a message back to you, Albus. Then, at least everyone will know what is going on. I just hope that I can stop him from altering anything."

Ginny stood up and walked over beside Harry. She hugged him and said, "Don't worry, Harry. You'll be able to handle Voldemort. I have faith in you."

Molly nodded, "So do the rest of us, Harry. We all believe in you."

Harry smiled, "Thanks. I needed that. Well, does anyone else have anything they want to add?"

The rest of the Order shook their heads to indicate a negative. Dawlish said, "If there is nothing else, then I will get back to the Ministry."

Harry called after him as he walked from the room, "Don't work too hard, Dawlish."

Dawlish grinned back over his shoulder, "Don't worry, Harry. I intend to work harder until this is over, and then I am going to take a long vacation."

Harry nodded, "Me too."

Ron stood up, "If that's all we've got to talk about, I have homework to finish. I need to get back to the common room." He turned to Hermione, "Are you coming?"

Hermione nodded wordlessly, while the rest of the room looked on in shock. Harry caught Ron's eye and raised his eyebrows expectantly. Ron winked. Harry chuckled lightly as the two teenagers left the room. Neville got up, "Come on, Luna, we should follow them."

Harry turned to Albus, "We'll go with them. I will speak to you more at some other time."

Dumbledore nodded. The other two teenage couples left the office. While they were walking down the corridor, Harry spotted movement from the corner of his eye. He looked quickly, and saw Malfoy beating a hasty retreat down a corridor. Harry said to the others, "I'm going after Malfoy. Wait for me in the common room. Don't tell anyone where I am until I get back." Harry gave Ginny a quick kiss, and then took off.

Neville chuckled, "I guess that you get tired of him running off to do something all the time."

Ginny shrugged, "You get used to it after awhile. I console myself with the knowledge that one day this will all be over, and then I will have Harry all to myself."

11. Duel with Lucius

Harry trailed Draco through the castle. Once he began to get closer to him, Harry quickly waved a hand across his body, and made himself invisible. He cast a Silencing Charm on himself just to be safe. Draco made his way through a series of corridors, and then out an exit of the castle that Harry did not even know existed. This was saying something considering how many hours he had spent poring over the Marauder's Map. Once Draco had exited the castle, it became apparently obvious what his destination was. Standing outside the castle was a cloaked and hooded individual that could only be a Death Eater. A quick wave of Harry's hand and the Death Eater was bound by a Disapparation Jinx.

Draco walked up to the individual and bowed, "Father."

Lucius nodded back to him, "What do you have to report that is so important that it required me to come personally?"

Draco replied, "They have just had an Order meeting in Dumbledore's office. Apparently, Potter went into the Forbidden Forest earlier and spoke with the centaurs. They have informed Potter of the Master's plan."

Lucius started, "What do you mean? Which plan?"

Draco sighed in trepidation, "Potter knows that the Dark Lord intends to attempt to alter time. He intends to try to stop him."

Lucius laughed, "He will never be able to stop our Master from going back in time."

Draco asked, "Will he be able to stop him once he goes?"

Lucius snorted, "That is ridiculous. There is no way that Potter will even know when he has left or to what time that he went to."

Draco shook his head in disagreement, "I have been spying on Potter for quite awhile now. He can sense magic of any kind. He will know when the Master casts the time travel spell, and he will be able to follow him back in time."

"Are you sure?"

Draco nodded, "Positive, Father."

Lucius replied, "Very well. I will take this news to the Dark Lord. Hopefully, he will not be too displeased. This is distressing news. The Potter boy can be quite a bit of trouble."

Draco snorted, "Don't I know it. I have been in school with him for over six years."

Lucius raised a hand, "Farewell, my son. I will speak with you again concerning anything that you have discovered."

Draco bowed again, "Farewell, Father. I live only to serve the Dark Lord." Draco turned and began walking back towards the castle. Lucius turned and headed for the border of the Hogwarts grounds so that he could Apparate away.

Harry grinned to himself. Lucius was about to receive quite a surprise. Harry followed Lucius to the edge of the grounds, and then made himself visible. Lucius caught the movement out of the corner of his eye and dove while drawing his wand and screaming out, "Crucio."

Harry stood still and waited for the curse to hit him. Once it had, Harry laughed lightly, "Come now, Lucius, did you really expect so feeble a spell from so feeble a wizard to harm me?"

Lucius stood up, "I will destroy you, Potter."

Harry laughed again, "My, what fantasy. I didn't know that you were so prone to such flights of the imagination, Lucius."

Lucius assumed a dueling stance, "I will kill you, Potter."

Harry continued to laugh, "Let's see it then. I am anxious to pay you back for all the misery that you have brought into my life over the years."

Lucius waved his wand, "Avada Kedavra."

Harry made a circle with his arm in front of him, "Dissipato." The jet of green light disappeared halfway to Harry. Lucius began to fire off other curses at Harry, which Harry ignored. Harry began to return fire with light curse of his own. He caught Lucius with a Boil Hex, and several Tickling Charms. Lucius reversed these and finally paused in his assault.

Lucius stood there panting, while Harry continued to smile haughtily. Lucius said, "I can be off the Hogwart's grounds in two seconds, Potter. Then, you will never catch me."

Harry shook his head, "You are entirely too naïve, Lucius. I cast a Disapparation Jinx on you the moment I saw you on the grounds. You will not be leaving to go anywhere. My score with you will be settled tonight."

Lucius taunted, "So, what are you going to do, Potter? Take me to the Aurors for imprisonment? The Dark Lord will send people after me within a week."

Harry shook her head, "I have no intention of taking you alive, Lucius. You have caused my family far too much heartache."

Lucius ripped his mask from his face, "You aren't serious. I am beaten, and you would still kill me?"

Harry smiled evilly, "Wouldn't that be the same courtesy that you would show me? Why should I treat you any differently?"

Lucius paled, "Because you are one of the so-called good guys."

Harry laughed, "The idea of good and evil is purely subjective. If I am killing someone that is evil, then I am doing good. Good-bye, Lucius."

Lucius protested, "Wait.."

Harry cut him off by lifting his hand and saying, "Cuttera." The Cutting Curse hit Lucius in the chest and sliced deeply into his chest. He gurgled and then fell lifeless to the ground. Harry raised a hand and a blue light came from his hand healing the wound so that Lucius appeared unharmed. Harry flicked his hand at Lucius's body, "Mobilicorpus." Lucius' body rose from the ground and floated beside Harry. Harry turned and walked back to the castle with Lucius' body trailing behind him.

Within a few minutes, Harry had returned to the corridor outside Dumbledore's office. He left Lucius floating just beside the gargoyle, and climbed up the stairs to Dumbledore's office. Dumbledore looked up as Harry entered the room, "I didn't expect to see you back here this quickly, Harry."

Harry shrugged, "I didn't expect to be back here this quickly. However, Draco went to meet with his father earlier. I don't know how, but he was spying on the Order meeting. He went to report what was said during the meeting."

Dumbledore asked, "Did you stop him from making his report?"

Harry shook his head, "No, I allowed him to tell everything to Lucius. Then, I intercepted Lucius before he could get off the grounds."

"What did you do to him?" asked Dumbledore with a sense of foreboding.

Harry shrugged again, "He's dead if that is what you are asking."

"How did he die?"

"Cutting Curse. It wasn't pretty." Harry turned and waved his hand. Lucius' body rose up the stairs into the office.

Dumbledore walked from behind his desk to examine the body. "He doesn't appear to be damaged in any way."

Harry nodded, "I know. The sight was a bit gruesome, so I decided to heal his body before I went traipsing through the castle with his body in tow."

Dumbledore sighed, "You do realize that this will make it look as if you used the Killing Curse."

Harry nodded again, "I'm aware, but after what happened the last time that Fudge dragged me in front of the Wizengamot, he isn't going to be in any hurry to do so again."

Dumbledore smiled, "Good point. However, you could have taken him alive."

Harry snorted, "We have taken him alive. Twice. Both times he has been rescued. I'm not going to let him loose, again."

Dumbledore sighed, "I suppose I need to contact Dawlish, and have the Aurors come to collect the body."

Harry agreed, "I suppose so. They will need to question me as well."

Dumbledore grabbed Floo Powder off the shelf above the fireplace, and threw it into the fire while saying, "Dawlish, Ministry of Magic."

A moment later, Dawlish's head appeared in the fire, "What can I do for you, Albus?"

Dumbledore replied, "Mr. Potter has captured a Death Eater on the grounds."

Dawlish asked, "Which one?"

"Lucius Malfoy." said Harry.

"Alive or dead?" asked Dawlish.

"Dead." Harry replied evenly.

Dawlish nodded, "Let me get Kingsley and we will be at the castle shortly."

Dumbledore nodded, "Thank you, Dawlish. We will be waiting."

Dawlish nodded once more, and then disappeared from the fire. Dumbledore and Harry both sat patiently in silence until Kingsley and Dawlish popped through the fire. Both of them saw the body floating in mid-air at the same time. Kingsley asked, "What happened?"

Harry sighed, "Well, I guess that I have to explain this one more time. I caught sight of Draco as I left the Order meeting, earlier. I decided to follow him to see what he was up to, because he seemed to be in a hurry. He went outside to meet with a Death Eater that turned out to be his father. I waited until Draco delivered his message and then dueled with Lucius after Draco had returned to the castle. Needless to say, Lucius lost."

Kingsley nodded, "You're right. You didn't have to say it."

Dawlish asked, "Did you hear what Draco said to Lucius?"

Harry nodded grimly, "Yes, he was reporting on what we had said at the Order meeting earlier."

Kingsley gasped, "How did he know what was going on in the meeting?"

Harry shrugged, "I have no idea. He has found out how to spy directly into Dumbledore's office, though. We're going to have to determine how he is accomplishing it, and put a stop to it."

Dawlish said, "Well, I guess that is all we need to know for now. We need to return to the Ministry."

Harry smiled, "I need to get back to Gryffindor Tower before Ginny leads a charge looking for me. I've been gone for quite awhile."

Dumbledore smiled, "I suggest that you hurry. I don't relish having young Miss Weasley blowing my door off."

Harry chuckled, "I would imagine not. I will see all of you later." Harry bolted down the stairs and hurried towards Gryffindor tower. He arrived just as Ginny was exiting through the portrait hole. Harry smiled at her, "Going somewhere?"

Ginny put her hands on her hips, "Yes, I was going to come looking for you. You took off after Malfoy earlier, and I haven't heard from you. Something could have happened."

Harry gave Ginny a look that plainly said, 'Who are you kidding?' Harry actually said, "Voldemort is not going to come onto the Hogwarts grounds. He isn't suicidal. Since he is the only wizard alive capable of harming me at the moment, I don't think that you have much to worry about."

Ginny sighed, "I know. I just worry."

Harry laughed, "I think that is what all women do." Harry paused for a moment, "Have I told you how much I love you?"

Ginny smiled, "Not in the last hour or so."

"I should have. Can you forgive me for not doing it?"

Ginny nodded, "As long as you tell me what happened after you took off following Malfoy."

Harry smiled, "I have every intention of telling you, but I have already told this story twice, and I would rather not have to tell it any more than I have to. So, let's get the others."

"They're waiting in the common room."

Harry raised his eyebrows, "Even Luna?"

Ginny nodded, "Yes."

Harry laughed, "I can't believe that all of you let a Ravenclaw into the Gryffindor common room."

Ginny gave Harry a cocky look, "Hey, Luna is okay."

"I know that. It just seems weird that a Ravenclaw is in the Gryffindor common room." said Harry.

Ginny laughed, "I suppose so. Let's just go in." Ginny grabbed Harry by the hand and then turned around and headed back through the portrait hole into the common room.

Ron, Hermione, Neville, and Luna looked up as Harry and Ginny entered the common room. Ron said, "It's about time. You've taken forever."

Harry laughed, "I couldn't help it. Malfoys are always a pain."

Hermione caught the plural before anyone else, "What do you mean Malfoys?"

Harry shook his head in amusement, "Nothing gets by you, does it, Hermione?"

Hermione shook her head emphatically, "No, now let's hear the story."

"Alright. Here goes." Harry settled himself down into a cozy armchair, and Ginny sat down on his lap and leaned back into him. Harry wrapped his arms around her, and then began to speak again, "I followed Draco outside the castle where he met with his father."

Hermione interrupted, "Are you saying that Lucius Malfoy was on the grounds?"

Harry nodded, "Yes, Hermione, that is exactly what I'm saying."

Ginny broke in, "Hermione, it's going to take a lot longer for him to tell this story if you constantly ask questions."

Harry smiled, "Thank you, Ginny. Now, where was I? Oh yeah. After Draco met with Lucius, I listened to their conversation, and then waited for Draco to go back into the castle. Once he was gone, I allowed Lucius to see me, and then we dueled. After that, I returned to Dumbledore's office, where I have been for awhile. Dawlish and Kingsley came by, and the four of us sat around discussing Lucius being here."

Luna asked, "What were Lucius and Draco talking about?"

Harry replied, "They were discussing what we were talking about in the Order meeting earlier." Harry waited a moment for the response to this pronouncement. He wasn't disappointed.

All of them gasped as the implication caught up with them. Hermione asked, “How did they know?”

Harry shrugged, “Apparently, Draco has found some way to spy directly into Dumbledore’s office.”

Ron asked, “How is he doing it?”

Harry gave Ron a pointed look, while Hermione smacked him upside the head. Harry said, “If I knew that, I would have already stopped him.”

Ron looked sheepish, “Oh.”

Neville chortled at Ron, “Sometimes I wonder about you, Ron. If you don’t start thinking before you open your mouth, Hermione is going to end up knocking your head right off your shoulders.”

The rest of the group laughed as Ron bit his lip to keep from retorting. Harry stood up, “I think that it is time to call it a night.” Harry kissed Ginny and then headed up the stairs to the dormitories.

The rest of the month of February passed by with Harry balancing his time between the Dueling Club, Quidditch practice, classes, homework, snuggling with Ginny, and Animagus training with Ron and Hermione.

One day at the end of September, Harry was sitting in the Gryffindor common room in a rare moment alone. He dozed slightly and drifted into Voldemort’s consciousness. Voldemort was circling a large circle drawn on the ground in a silver chalk. Bellatrix was just within his peripheral vision. Voldemort spoke to her after just a moment, “My dear Bella, the time is drawing near. Soon, I will be ready to cast the spell.”

Bellatrix bowed and smiled, “Yes, Master. Then, the Potter boy will know defeat.”

Voldemort smiled maliciously, “Yes. The time travel spell will prove to be Potter’s undoing. Once he is dead, I will rule everything.”

Bellatrix smiled again, “Your loyal Death Eaters will await your return, Master. We will await your ascension to greatness.”

Voldemort sighed, “I can barely stand to wait another week until the moon is right for the spell.”

Bellatrix bowed, “Don’t worry, My Lord, all will go as planned. There is no way that Potter will discover our whereabouts.”

Voldemort nodded, “I know. I have planned carefully for this. He cannot retrieve the information from my mind, even though he is listening to this conversation right now.”

Bellatrix whipped her head around as if she would be able to see Harry. Voldemort cackled, “Don’t be foolish, Bella. He is listening through my mind. He is not here in any physical sense.”

Bellatrix sighed in relief. It seemed as if she was about to say something more, but Harry was roused from his sleep by Ron, who raced into the common room yelling, “Harry, I did it. I did it.”

Harry leaped from his chair, “What did you do?”

Ron literally seemed to be bubbling over with excitement, “I transformed into a bear. I can do it.”

Harry rolled his eyes, “Is that all? You woke me up for that?”

Ron bristled, “Well, excuse me. I thought you would be happy for me.”

Harry sighed, “I am, but I was inside Voldemort’s mind for the first time in awhile. He was discussing the time travel spell with Bellatrix. I might have been able to find out something.”

Ron’s eyes widened, “Oh, I’m sorry.”

Harry waved him off, “You didn’t know. We’ll try to find out another way. At least I have a general idea of when he is going to cast the spell.”

Ron asked, “When?”

Harry replied, “Sometime next week.”

Ron paled, “That soon?”

Harry nodded, “Unfortunately.”

Ron asked, “Are you going to follow him back in time?”

Harry shrugged, “Do I have a choice?”

Ron grinned, “I suppose not. I guess all that I can say is good luck.”

12. First Time Interlude

The rest of the week passed by and then the next week began. After the Dueling Club meeting and dinner on Monday night, Harry and Ginny were walking up to the Astronomy Tower to look at the stars when Harry suddenly fell over onto the floor. The last thing that he heard before he slipped into unconsciousness was Ginny screaming his name.

Harry awoke in dark and unfamiliar surroundings. He was surrounded by Death Eaters, but none of them seemed to be paying any attention to the fact that he was present. Harry reached out to grab one and his hand passed right through the Death Eater. Harry thought to himself, "I must only be here through my connection with Voldemort." It was quickly obvious that Voldemort was casting the time travel spell. Once Harry got over the shock of being where he was, Harry heard a great deal of chanting. Harry walked towards where the chanting was coming from and saw the chalked circle that he had seen the previous week. Voldemort was standing in the center of it surrounded by Death Eaters. Bellatrix was standing back slightly from the throng, smiling. Harry thought to himself again, "You just keep smiling, Bellatrix. One day, we will meet and I will wipe that smile off your face." Harry continued to stand and watch as the ceremony progressed. Once the ceremony was almost complete, Harry concentrated on Voldemort's essence, so that when Voldemort jumped back in time, Harry knew exactly where he had gone.

A moment later, Harry awoke in the Hospital Wing with Ginny sitting in a chair beside him, asleep. Harry shook Ginny to wake her up. She jumped up, "Oh, Harry, I'm so glad you're okay."

Harry grabbed her by the upper arms, "Quickly, go to Dumbledore. Tell him that I went gallivanting."

Ginny gasped, and Harry disappeared. Ginny jumped up and went running pell-mell out of the Hospital Wing and then down the corridor towards Dumbledore's office. She reached the gargoyle and gave it the password, and then went charging up into the office. She found Dumbledore sitting behind his desk, reading. He looked up as she burst into the room gasping for breath. Dumbledore immediately rose, "What has happened, Ginny?"

Ginny caught her breath, "Harry has went gallivanting."

Dumbledore sighed, "Then, our worst fears have been realized. Now, all we can do is hope, and have faith in Harry."

Ginny smiled, "I always have faith in Harry."

Dumbledore returned her smile, "So do I."

Harry appeared smack in the middle of a war zone. He dove to the ground behind a rock, so that he could inspect the situation. A quick observation told him that this was a major battle. There were wizards all over the place, and it was obvious that there were Muggle bombs going off in the background. After a few minutes of trying to determine which side he should aid, Harry spotted Dumbledore leading an assault force of wizards. That decided it for Harry. He leaped up and followed Dumbledore and his men. They attacked the flank of the opposing army of wizards. Harry just joined right in.

It was readily apparent that Dumbledore's forces were being pushed back. Harry decided to lend his true power to the battle. "I command the winds to obey me. Swirl and blow. Hurricanos!" A storm of whirlwinds swept into the opposing army of wizards and scattered them to the four winds. A few more minutes of fierce fighting sent the opposing army running in retreat.

A wizard standing near Harry clapped him on the back, "That was amazing, my friend." The man stuck out his hand in greeting, "My name is Douglas Weatherby. Who are you?"

Harry replied, "My name is Harry. Just Harry."

Several wizards began to congregate around him to congratulate him on turning the tide of the battle. Dumbledore walked through the throng of wizards, "Come now. We have won a battle, not the war. Stay sharp, gentlemen, and get back to your posts." Dumbledore turned his gaze to Harry as the rest of the wizards dispersed from the crowd, "Now, why don't you tell me who you are, and exactly how you just cast that spell at your age?"

Another aged wizard walked up, "Lighten up, Albus. The boy saved our necks just now. The least you could do is hear him out before you assume the worst."

Albus sighed, "Very well, Nicholas. Come back to camp with me, boy. We will speak there."

Harry nodded, "Of course, Albus. Let's go."

Dumbledore eyed him suspiciously, "Do I know you?"

Harry grinned, "Not yet, but you will."

Nicholas asked, "What exactly does that mean?"

Harry chuckled, "Come on, and you will find out."

The three wizards walked back into the camp together. They reached the command tent, and stepped inside. Dumbledore seated himself at the desk that was at the center of the tent. Nicholas took a seat in a comfy armchair. Harry stood before the desk, and said, "I know that what I am about to request is going to sound weird, but I ask that you humor me until I can explain everything."

Dumbledore nodded, "Proceed."

Harry asked, "What year is it?"

Nicholas choked on the cup of tea that he had conjured and began to drink. He spluttered, "You don't even know what year it is?"

Harry shook his head, "I'm not from this time."

Dumbledore glanced sharply at Harry, "What do you mean you're not from this time? Interacting with anyone in the past is forbidden by the Ministry."

Harry nodded, "I know, but there are special circumstances that make this necessary. A dark wizard has come back in time to try and alter the course of events. I came to stop him. To do that I need to know exactly what is going on, and that makes it necessary to interact with certain people."

Nicholas gasped, "You could irrevocably alter the course of time. This is too dangerous to even attempt."

Harry replied, "Not doing it is even more dangerous than doing it."

Dumbledore motioned for Nicholas to calm down, "Continue with your questions."

"What year is it?"

Nicholas replied, "It is 1945."

Harry swore violently, "Damn it! So, this is what he intends to do."

Dumbledore asked, "Who?"

Harry sighed, "Voldemort. I take it that you are in the middle of the war with Grindelwald."

Dumbledore nodded, "How did you know that?"

"I'm from the future. I am the Heir of Gryffindor." said Harry.

Dumbledore protested, "That's impossible. The only heirs that are still alive are Nicholas, Hilda Hufflepuff, William Potter, and me."

Harry shook his head, "You are forgetting the Heir of Slytherin."

Dumbledore's eyes widened, "Who is that?"

Harry smiled, "Do you remember Tom Marvolo Riddle?"

Dumbledore nodded, "Yes, he graduated from Hogwarts last year."

Harry continued, "Tom is the last remaining Heir of Salazar Slytherin, and he is the wizard that I have followed back in time to stop. He has fashioned himself a new name in the future. Lord Voldemort. He makes Grindelwald look like a boy scout."

Nicholas laughed, "The Ministry must be getting desperate to send a wizard as young as you back after someone with that kind of power. We have four Heirs leading the fight against Grindelwald, and we haven't been able to defeat him, yet. If this Lord Voldemort is supposed to be worse, how are you supposed to defeat him?"

Harry replied, "I am the Heir of Gryffindor, and he is the Heir of Slytherin. The final battle was meant to be decided by us."

Dumbledore protested, "I'm telling you that the only remaining Heir of Gryffindor is William Potter."

Harry nodded, "I know. William is my grandfather. My name is Harry Potter."

Nicholas asked, "If this Lord Voldemort is so powerful, what are Albus, William, Hilda, and I doing about him?"

Harry answered, "You, William, and Hilda are not doing anything. You are all dead."

Dumbledore asked, "How?"

Harry shrugged, "I don't know about Hilda. She must have died before my time, because I have never heard of her. Nicholas, I am sorry to say that you and Dumbledore destroyed your Sorcerer's Stone to stop Voldemort from getting his hands on it. You died of old age as a result. My grandfather died shortly after I was born. I don't even remember him."

Nicholas snorted, "I think that this is a complete waste of time. This young man is obviously out of his mind."

Dumbledore mused, "I don't know, Nicholas. His story is just crazy enough to be true. What year are you from, Harry?"

Harry replied, "It is 1997 in my time. You are the Headmaster of Hogwarts. You take over after Armando Dippet retires."

"Does my future self know that you have come back in time?"

Harry nodded, "Yes, I sent someone to him with the message that I had departed to follow Voldemort."

Nicholas asked, "Why would Dumbledore let you come back when he would be much better suited to fight a wizard of this magnitude?"

Harry grinned, "Because I am the best choice to fight Voldemort. I am the only wizard that can come close to rivaling him in power."

Nicholas scoffed, "Are you suggesting that you are more powerful than Albus?"

Harry nodded, "That is exactly what I am suggesting. I am the Child of the Prophecy."

Dumbledore asked, "What exactly does that mean?"

Harry replied, "After you become the Headmaster of Hogwarts, you go to the HogsHead Pub in Hogsmeade to interview a candidate for the Divination job, even though you told me that it was against your inclination to allow the subject to continue at Hogwarts. You decided that you should at least hear her out since she is Cassandra Trelawney's great-granddaughter. Once you had concluded the interview, and prepared to leave, she went into a trance and gave you the Prophecy. It stated that a boy would be born meeting certain prerequisites that would have the power to destroy the Dark Lord. That boy was me. I have been fighting Voldemort and his minions ever since I have returned to the wizarding world."

Dumbledore asked, "What do you mean returned to the wizarding world?"

Harry sighed, "To protect me after my parents were killed, you sent me to live with my Mum's sister, who is a Muggle. I lived the next ten years in the Muggle world with no knowledge whatsoever that I was a wizard. Then, I received my Hogwarts letter, and was allowed to come to school. I have been at war ever since. I hope to end it soon. I finally have the power to destroy Voldemort, and that is exactly what I intend to do."

Nicholas said, "If you are as powerful as you claim, then let us see some kind of demonstration of this power."

Harry eyed Nicholas, "Curse me."

Nicholas appeared to be taken aback, "What?"

"You heard me. Curse me. Take your best shot." said Harry.

Nicholas drew his wand, and said, "Petrificus Totalus."

The curse hit Harry and dissipated. "You can do better than that. Let's see something that a first year can't cast."

Nicholas whipped his wand around and said, "Explo-dra."

Harry yawned as the Explosion Hex contacted him. "Now do you believe me?"

Nicholas nodded wordlessly and looked at Dumbledore in utter consternation.

Dumbledore cleared his throat, "Well, I think that settles the question of your power. What we still don't know is whether or not you are telling the truth."

Harry snorted, "What would I have to gain by lying to you about something like this. I think that it is obvious if I had underhanded intentions, then it would be quite easy for me to destroy the two of you. I am here for one reason and one reason only. That is to stop Voldemort and send him back to my time. That way I can deal with him without worrying about altering time."

Nicholas asked, "So what do you think that he is doing right now?"

Harry laughed, "If I know Tom, then he is with Grindelwald right now. He's probably filling him in on how to defeat all of you. It would be in Voldemort's interest to allow Grindelwald to kill all of you and then to merely finish off Grindelwald, so that there will be no one to challenge his power in the future."

Dumbledore sighed, "So, that means that we will have severe difficulty defeating Grindelwald."

Harry nodded, "Yes, I am sure you will. However, since Voldemort plans on upsetting the balance of power his way, then I will just have to counteract that with my own power."

Dumbledore grinned, "Well, then I guess that it is time to plan the final offensive on Grindelwald's fortress. We will have to go meet with William and Hilda. Then, we can get on with it."

Nicholas stood up, "Let's go, then."

13. Meeting HufflePuff's Heir

Harry followed Nicholas and Dumbledore back to the main camp, where there was a giant command center. Dumbledore strode in first, and Harry was amused to note that most everyone treated Dumbledore the same way that Harry himself was treated in the future. It was obvious that all of the troops held the man in awe. Harry followed docilely, so as to not call undue attention to himself. He wanted to refrain from performing too many Memory Charms. Dumbledore led him to the center of the command area, where Harry saw another witch and wizard poring over a map.

The witch looked up as Albus approached and smiled warmly, "Albus, love, I think that we have located Grindelwald. To the best of our spies ability to determine, he is taking refuge in this fortress." She pointed to a fortress on the map.

Harry looked down to the map, and nodded in approval at the detail that the map showed. Albus replied to the witch, "That is very good news indeed, Hilda. I have very good news as well." Albus pointed to Harry. "This young man right here may be the answer to our prayers."

Hilda and the other wizard that was standing with her looked Harry over. The wizard asked, "How do you expect a wizard so young to help with a battle of this magnitude, Albus? He shouldn't even be out of school, yet."

Harry smiled, "That is true, grandfather, but that has little to do with the current situation that we find ourselves in."

The wizard seemed as if he was about to retort, when he paused and turned to Albus, "Did he just call me grandfather?"

Nicholas chuckled from behind Albus, "He most certainly did, William. If the story that this young man has presented us with is true, which I believe it is, he is your grandchild from the future."

William Potter continued to stare at Harry in complete shock. Hilda snorted, "Preposterous. No child of his age could withstand traveling through time like this. Very few wizards could cast such a spell, and no one could cast such a spell on another individual."

Albus nodded, "I would tend to agree with you, my love, but I think that you should hear the young man's story. After hearing what he has to say and seeing a taste of his abilities, I have no reason to doubt that he is being completely truthful with us."

Hilda motioned toward some chairs that were across the room, "Let's hear it, then."

Harry took a deep breath, "I am from the year 1997. In my time, the reigning Dark Lord goes by the name of Voldemort. His real name is Tom Marvolo Riddle. He is the one who opened the Chamber of Secrets at Hogwarts a few years ago in your time. He is Salazar Slytherin's Heir."

Hilda gasped, "How do you know about the Chamber of Secrets?"

Harry smiled, "The Chamber of Secrets will be opened again while I am at school. I went into it and defeated the Basilisk contained therein."

Albus smiled, "So, that's what was in the Chamber. I have always wondered what kind of creature that Salazar had imprisoned in that place."

Hilda interrupted him, "Enough of that. I want to know what you are doing back in this time, when it is strictly forbidden to interact with witches and wizards of the past."

William nodded, "I would like to know that myself."

Harry sighed, "Voldemort is seeking a way to defeat me in the future. So, he has come back to the past to attempt to alter the course of events and find a way to be rid of me."

William asked, "Why does he want rid of you?"

Harry answered, "Because I am the only wizard alive that can defeat him."

Hilda snorted, "That's a little arrogant. Where are we?"

Harry replied, "With the exception of Dumbledore, dead."

Hilda gasped, "So, Albus is the only one of the Heirs to survive the war with Grindelwald."

Harry shook his head, "No, Nicholas and my grandfather both survive. You, on the other hand, I don't know about. I have never even heard of you. I didn't even know that you existed."

William asked, "What happens to me and Nicholas?"

"You die just after I am born. I would assume from old age, since no one has ever told me that you were killed. Nicholas and Dumbledore decide to destroy his Sorcerer's Stone after Voldemort tries to steal it during my first year at Hogwarts. He died as soon as he ran out of Elixir of Life."

Hilda asked, "Why hasn't Albus dealt with this Dark Lord? Surely he can't be as bad as Grindelwald."

Harry snorted, "He makes Grindelwald look like a boy scout. Voldemort's power is insane. I have already seen him defeat Albus in a duel without even breaking a sweat. Then, he duelled and killed me after that."

Nicholas jumped in, "Whoa, hold it. What do you mean, he killed you?"

Harry shrugged, "Well, I didn't actually die, but he hit me with the Avada Kedavra Curse."

William protested, "No one can survive that curse."

Harry smiled, "That's what they thought in my time as well. I've done it twice, and Voldemort has done it once. Not everyone can be killed by it."

Hilda asked, "How do you kill someone that can't be killed by Avada Kedavra?"

"I wish I knew, then I could finish Voldemort. For now I will be happy with just forcing him to return to our own time without altering anything," said Harry.

William asked, "Why is he here?"

Harry let out a large breath, "Voldemort knows that he can't defeat me as things stand, so he is trying to remove the protection that I had when I was a child, so that he can kill me when I am too small to defend myself. He thinks that if he kills Dumbledore in this time, then I will have no one to protect me when I am young. Then, he will be able to dispose of me, and he will be able to take over since I am the only wizard with the power to handle him."

William asked, "Just how powerful are you?"

Harry grinned, "I can do things that most witches and wizards can only dream about being able to do."

William persisted, "Like what?"

Harry disappeared and then reappeared. "Does that give you an idea?"

Even Albus seemed to be surprised, "I'm impressed, Mr. Potter. Very few wizards are capable of true invisibility."

Hilda gave Albus a look, "What do you mean very few? The only two living wizards that are capable of it are you and Grindelwald."

Dumbledore smiled, "True, but there have been several that have been able to do it over the years."

Hilda replied, "Only descendants of Merlin."

Harry laughed, "Which I am, so I don't see a problem with it."

Hilda asked, "What do you mean? You're not a descendant of Merlin, are you?"

Harry pointed at William, "He's my Grandfather, and we are the Heirs of Gryffindor. Godric was Merlin's Great-Grandson, so that makes us descendants of Merlin as well as the Dumbledores."

Albus chuckled, "You certainly are well informed, Mr. Potter."

Harry replied, "I should be. Your future self made sure of it."

Nicholas smiled, "It appears so. Since we have determined why you are here, I think that we need to begin to worry about what you are going to do now that you are here."

Harry nodded, "I know. I have to be very careful of my actions. I came back to prevent Voldemort from altering time, but I don't want to inadvertently alter it myself. That is why I will have to be performing Memory Charms on all of you before I leave."

Hilda drew her wand and pointed it at Harry, "I knew that we couldn't trust you. You just want to gain our confidence so that we will submit to a Memory Charm."

Harry snorted, "I'm afraid that I have to burst your bubble, but I don't need you to submit to a Memory Charm. There is little that you could do to stop me from casting one on you."

Hilda advanced threateningly on Harry, "I have my wand drawn and aimed at you, while you do not even have your wand in hand. I am in control of the situation."

Harry smiled, "Really. We will have to see about that." Harry waved his hand and suddenly Hilda's wand jumped from her hand into Harry's. "It seems that the tables have turned and now I am the one holding a wand while you are without."

Hilda stared at her hand in shock, "How did you do that?"

Harry flipped her wand back to her, "I don't need a wand to perform magic. In fact, I don't even have a wand anymore. Voldemort destroyed mine in our last battle."

William cleared his throat loudly, "Hilda, I'm surprised at you. I would have expected one of us men to give him the macho attitude. Now, if you will stop with your little contest, I believe that we have a battle to plan."

Hilda looked sullen for a moment, but finally nodded and then sat down. William turned back to Harry, "Well, young man, what exactly do you plan to do to help us?"

Harry shrugged, "All I know about the final battle with Grindelwald is that Dumbledore is the one that ultimately defeated him. I am prepared to get Albus inside that castle, and then insure that Voldemort does not interfere in any way. The rest of you should be able to handle the rest of the battle. I will have to perform Memory Charms that erases any knowledge of me before Albus and I leave for the castle. I will perform the charm on Albus after he has defeated Grindelwald, and I have sent Voldemort back to our own time."

William stood up, "Then, let's get back to the map, and figure out how we are going to do this."

Harry stood up beside him, "Let's do that, Grandpa."

William smiled, "I like the sound of that. I haven't known you long, but I hope my son is as good a man as you seem to be."

Harry smiled, "Oh, he was. You don't have anything to worry about in that respect."

William clapped a hand onto Harry's back, and then they walked over to the Situation Map. Hilda, Nicholas, and Albus followed. It took about thirty minutes for the five Heirs to hammer out a plan to handle Voldemort.

Once they were finished discussing things, Harry turned to William and Nicholas, "I'm afraid that it is time for the two of you to forget me."

Nicholas held out his hand. Harry shook it. Nicholas said, "Good luck, Harry. I hope all goes well."

Harry smiled, "So do I."

William cleared his throat, "I don't think that I will ever get another opportunity to tell you this, Harry. I'm proud to know that I have a Grandson like you."

Harry's eyes brimmed with unshed tears, "I'm glad that I got a moment to know you, Grandfather. It was more than I ever truly hoped for."

William smiled, "Having a grandchild was more than I ever hoped for." The two Heirs of Gryffindor clasped each other in a manly hug, and then Harry stepped back from the older wizard.

"Goodbye." Then, Harry waved his hand at Nicholas and William. Both of them suddenly had a dreamy expression flow over their face, and Harry beat a hasty retreat from the room.

Albus and Hilda followed. Dumbledore asked, "What will they remember, Harry?"

Harry replied, "They will remember all the plans that we made minus the things that pertained to me. They think that they are supposed to lead the frontal assault, while you and Hilda are going to infiltrate the castle to deal with Grindelwald."

Dumbledore nodded, "I suggest we get moving. They will have the troops moving shortly then."

Harry took one last look back towards the camp, "Goodbye, Grandfather." Then, he turned and headed for the castle of the evil wizard Grindelwald.

Dumbledore and Hilda smiled at each other and hugged before following Harry towards their destiny.

14. Battle with Voldemort

Back at the camp, Nicholas and William recovered from the effects of the Memory Charm to discover that Hilda and Albus were already gone. Nicholas harrumphed, "What are we doing standing around like this? Albus and Hilda will be waiting on us to begin the attack."

William sighed, "I guess we just got nostalgic for a moment." He held out his hand to Nicholas, "Nicholas, I would like you to know that regardless of what happens today, it has been an honor to know and work with you."

Nicholas grinned ruefully, "The two of us are going to be around for a long time after this. Hilda and Albus are going to handle that bastard." Nicholas reached out and took William's hand, "However, I agree. It has been an honor and a pleasure. Now, let's get to work."

William nodded emphatically and the two of them bustled off through the camp to prepare the troops for the final assault of a war that had gone on entirely too long.

It was immediately obvious to Dumbledore, Hilda, and Harry when the attack was launched. A gigantic explosion burst through the air.

Dumbledore sighed, "It appears that it has begun. We should go."

Harry shook his head, "Wait just a few minutes. Voldemort might make himself known in the battle. Then, I will have to remain."

Several minutes later, Hilda asked, "Is he aiding the battle?"

Harry shook his head, "No, he is hiding his magical signature from me, and that means that he is not casting any powerful magic. Let's head out." Harry took off for the castle at a pace that Hilda and Albus were hard pressed to match.

Within a half an hour the three wizards were just outside the rear of the castle. Albus sighed, "Making our way around to the front of the castle and getting in is going to be difficult."

Harry snorted, "Who said anything about going around to the front of the castle?"

Hilda asked, "How else are we going to get in without attracting a whole lot of attention? We can't just blow a hole through the back wall. Every creature in the place would be on us in minutes."

Harry grinned, "You are right. We can't blow a hole in the back wall, but that doesn't mean we can't make one." Harry waved his hand and muttered under his breath. An archway appeared in the wall before them.

Hilda gasped, "How did you do that? The enchantments that guard this castle are insane. Albus and I have been unable to alter its integrity."

Harry replied, "You know what they say. Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Stop worrying about how I did it, and let's just get in the castle."

Dumbledore chuckled, "Come on, Hilda. Even if he told you, he would have to remove it with the Memory Charm. Sometimes it is better not to know."

Hilda sighed, "I suppose. Let's finish this, my love."

Dumbledore nodded, "Let's." The three wizards entered the castle of Grindelwald.

The fighting on the outside of the castle was extraordinarily intense. Voldemort and Grindelwald were standing in Grindelwald's chamber overlooking the battle.

Grindelwald growled, "I suppose this means you were right."

Voldemort said calmly, "Of course. That Muggle-loving fool Dumbledore should be on his way. I will destroy him and then you will be free to handle the other Heirs at your leisure."

Grindlewald nodded, "I will retire to my upper chamber and wait for your signal."

Voldemort smiled evilly as Grindelwald left the room. He said quietly to himself, "Once, Dumbledore and the other Heirs are dealt with, I will be returning for your head, Grindelwald. There can only be one Dark Lord." Voldemort cackled maliciously.

Meanwhile, Harry was allowing Dumbledore and Hilda to handle the brunt of the Dark creatures that attacked them as they made their way through the castle. Hilda asked, "Why aren't you helping us more?"

Harry replied evenly, "I don't want Voldemort to know that I am here, or that I am coming with you. The less warning he has to my presence, the easier it will be to send him back to the present."

Dumbledore nodded, "It appears that we have made it to our target."

Harry looked up. Standing at the end of the corridor they were in was a group of guard trolls. Harry waved his hand and knocked the trolls unconscious. "Once, I confront Voldemort, the two of you need to beat a hasty retreat, and continue on after Grindelwald. One way or another, this ends tonight."

Hilda and Albus nodded with conviction. Hilda replied, "We've been at this a lot longer than you, Harry. We know our jobs."

Harry smiled, "I know. I'm just trying to say good luck."

Hilda smiled back, "I would have liked to have a child just like you, Harry. He would have been interesting to say the least."

Harry chuckled, "Let's just go." Harry let Albus and Hilda charge into the room ahead of him while he made himself invisible and followed just behind. The two Heirs burst into the room that was supposed to be Grindelwald's chambers to find an unfamiliar wizard standing in the center of the room with his wand drawn.

Albus challenged him, "Who are you stranger? Where is Grindelwald?"

Voldemort smiled, "I am your worst nightmare, you Muggle-loving fool."

Albus and Hilda assumed dueling stances. Voldemort cackled, "I see that you are going to allow me to enjoy this." Voldemort whipped his wand around, "Avada Kedavra."

The jet of green light sped towards Dumbledore, who didn't even attempt to dodge the spell. However, the jet of green light stopped in its flight just before it contacted Dumbledore. Hilda visibly breathed a sigh of relief. The curse held in mid-air for a moment before dissipating. Voldemort whirled around, "Potter."

Harry appeared at Voldemort's side. "I'm glad to see you, Tom."

Voldemort backed up into a defensive stance. "How did you get here, Potter?"

Harry laughed, "Did you really think that I was going to allow you to come back in time without following you? What fantasy." Harry looked sideways at Albus and Hilda, "The two of you should continue after Grindelwald. I will follow after I deal with this." He indicated Voldemort with a twitch of his head.

The other two wizards nodded in affirmation, and then hurried on from the chamber to seek Grindelwald. Hilda looked over at Albus as the two of them left the room, "I hate to say this, but I actually doubted the young man. After seeing the way Voldemort looked after seeing Harry, I don't doubt him anymore."

Albus shook his head, "Definitely not. I could sense the evil malevolence and power radiating from that man. I would not want to have to face him in battle. He is far more powerful than Grindelwald."

Hilda nodded, "I know. Now. Let's end the menace to our time, while Harry handles his."

Albus merely smiled as the two of them headed on.

Harry continued to stand and smirk at Voldemort back in the chamber that the other two Heirs had just vacated. Voldemort growled, "I am going to kill you, Potter."

Harry just laughed in his face. Then, he shook his head in amusement, “How long have you been telling me that, Tom? I have to admit it is beginning to get a little old. Especially since you still haven’t managed to get rid of me. The Child of the Prophecy that threatens your existence. It has been over sixteen years since you heard part of the Prophecy, and while you have won your fair share of the battles, the war is mine.”

Voldemort snarled, “Never underestimate evil, Potter. I will find a way to destroy you despite the Prophecy and this vaunted power of yours.”

Harry continued to laugh, “You are pathetic, Tom. To imagine the most powerful Dark Lord that has ever lived quivering in fear of a boy. Salazar Slytherin would be disgusted with you. At least he faced my ancestor head-on. He didn’t let everyone else fight his battles for him. You are nothing more than a coward, Tom. A pathetic excuse of a wizard.”

Voldemort swelled with rage at these words, “We will see about that, Potter.” Voldemort brandished his wand, and several of the statues sprang into life.

Harry grinned mischievously, “Finally, I was beginning to wonder when we were going to get this little party started. Harry snapped his fingers and conjured several statues that sprang into action to counter the ones that Voldemort had animated. The statues began to battle it out across the room. Harry waved a hand at Voldemort and said, “Stupefy.”

The curse bounced harmlessly off of Voldemort’s shield. Voldemort laughed, “You will have to do much better than that to defeat me, Potter.” He basically spat Harry’s name.

Harry grinned, “You know as well as I do, Tom, that I am just beginning to warm up.” The two continued to exchange curses, while the statues did battle around them. Harry started transfiguring objects and banishing them at Voldemort in an attempt to distract him. Voldemort began countering with Killing Curses at which Harry chuckled, “Tom, you know that one of those will not even harm me anymore.”

Voldemort coolly responded through the heat of the battle, “Eventually, I will wear you down, Potter. You do not have the magical reserves that I do. Then, my curses will harm you. I know your secret.”

Harry smiled in surprise, “I am impressed, Tom. You have certainly done your homework. However, what makes you think that I will allow this battle to continue for that long.”

During this conversation, the group of statues had finally managed to destroy each other. Voldemort waved his wand at the debris, and a whirlwind appeared that swirled all the dust around Harry. It blinded him for a moment, but he countered the storm to find a jet of green light headed right for his head. A quick wave of his hand, “Dissipato.” The curse disappeared. Harry shook his head, “You should know something like that will not work on me, Tom.”

Voldemort did not respond, but merely conjured a sword into his off-hand. Harry grinned, “So, you want to repeat this little embarrassment. I would be happy to accommodate you.” Harry conjured a sword in his own hands. Suddenly a huge explosion ripped about half the wall from behind Harry and Voldemort away.

Harry smiled, “It seems that the forces of light are winning this battle, Tom. You have failed to alter the course of history. I will still be protected by Dumbledore in the future, and you will still be unable to finish me.”

While this battle had been commencing, Nicholas and William had been waging a very successful campaign against Grindelwald’s minions outside of the castle. The attack began with at least two hundred witched and wizards launching Explosion Hexes at the front line of trolls and giants that were working for Grindelwald. From that point forward, the troops took the battle to the hit-wizards and dark creatures from the other side, one at a time. Bodies dropped on both sides left and right. Nicholas and William fought side by side, and led their troops to victory. During a pause in the fighting, William asked Nicholas, “So, how do you think Albus and Hilda are doing?”

Nicholas shrugged, “I don’t know, but they should be well inside the castle by now. Hopefully we can keep Grindelwald’s forces at bay long enough for the two of them to finish this.”

William nodded, "I know what you mean. Now. Let's give it to them." The two wizards smiled at each other and then advanced laying Stunning Spells around them almost indiscriminately. The troops continued to rally around the two Heirs, and continued to defeat, destroy and drive back the forces of evil. Once they reached the outskirts of the castle, William cast an Amplification Charm on himself, "Sonus. Everyone, Explosion Hexes at the tower on my mark. ONE, TWO, THREE. NOW!" A hundred Explosion Hexes went flying at the castle, and one of the walls of the main tower was torn away.

This was the room that Harry and Voldemort were in. Harry brandished his sword at Voldemort and smiled, "Grindelwald's forces are beaten, Tom. Just as it should be. Albus and Hilda are going to finish Grindelwald himself. I am going to send you back to the present. Then, it will be as if the two of us were never here. How does that make you feel, Tom? All that work to cast the time travel spell, and you have succeeded in accomplishing absolutely nothing." Harry chuckled as he continued to taunt Voldemort, "You are nothing, Tom. The light is supreme. Your reign passes with the sunrise, just as the darkness of night retreats every morning."

Voldemort snarled as he positioned himself for a fight, "The darkness always returns at the sunset, Potter. I will survive till the sun sets on your time on this Earth."

Harry shook his head, "I don't think so, Tom. Even if by some miracle you manage to defeat me, there will always be another to take my place. I may be the Child of this Prophecy, but there will always be another Prophecy and another child to fight you, Tom. I imagine that long after you are gone, there will be another Dark Lord. If I am alive, then I will destroy him as well. If I am not, then there will always be another Protector of the Light to stand against evil. That is the way it has always been, and that is the way that it will continue to be."

"We will see, Potter. The light has no advantage over the darkness."

"Oh, yes, Tom, we do. The light has something that you will never have or understand. People of the light are always willing to sacrifice themselves to save another. That gives us a power that you can neither understand, match, or defeat." replied Harry.

"Just what power is that, Potter?" Voldemort spat.

Harry smiled, "Love, Tom. Just love. That is all I need to keep me going."

Voldemort did not reply to this with words, but attacked savagely. Harry blocked the sword blow, and sidestepped the Killing Curse that followed it. Fifteen minutes into the battle, and curses began to be hurled through the opening in the castle wall as the attackers pushed even closer to the castle. The two duelers paused in their battle to observe the battle for a moment. Harry smiled again, "Soon enough you are going to find yourself facing five Heirs instead of just me, Tom. How long do you think that you will be able to last once my grandfather, Nicholas, Albus, and Hilda are at my side? I think that it is time for you to return to the present. Then, the two of us can settle this little battle in our own time."

Voldemort dropped his sword, and pocketed his wand, "Very well, Potter. You win this round. I will find another way to destroy you."

Harry bowed, but never took his eyes from Voldemort as he did so, "I look forward to foiling the attempt, Tom. Now, go."

Voldemort disappeared into the ethos of time, and Harry mentally followed his essence towards the present. Then, he sighed and took off in the direction that Albus and Hilda had taken to locate Grindelwald.

15. Battle with Grindelwald

Grindelwald left the room that Voldemort was using to wait for Albus Dumbledore and retired to his upper chamber. He thought back to his first encounter with Voldemort. The man had merely appeared out of thin air directly into Grindelwald's sleeping chamber, which should have been impossible since the entire castle was bound with the most powerful Anti-Apparation wards that Grindelwald could create. Grindelwald allowed his consciousness to drift back to that fateful night.

Grindelwald responded to the ward alarm that the castle had been invaded, and jumped up from his bed and snaked his hand out toward his wand to find that his wand was missing from his bedside table and the intruder was already within his own chambers. "How did you get here, and who are you?" demanded Grindelwald.

The mysterious hooded intruder chuckled and twirled Grindelwald's wand in his off hand. He stood there for a moment before finally speaking, "I am here to offer you Dumbledore's head on a platter."

Grindelwald eyed the stranger with trepidation, "Who are you that can offer such a prize? Dumbledore is one of the most powerful foes that I have ever faced."

Voldemort removed the hood from his head, and revealed his face. Grindelwald recoiled at the sight of the pale face with its red eyes and reptilian like snout. Then, he sucked in a breath of surprise and rephrased his question, "What are you?"

Voldemort continued to chuckle at Grindelwald's discomfiture. "I am from the future."

Grindelwald snorted in disbelief, "Do you expect me to believe that? You would have to be exceptionally powerful to cast a time travel spell."

Voldemort smiled evilly, "You have no conception of power, Grindelwald. I am the reigning Dark Lord of my time, and I seek to kill Albus Dumbledore."

"Why?" asked Grindelwald.

Voldemort replied, "There is a wizard in my time of unrivalled power. To reign supreme, I must defeat him, and the only way to do so is to destroy him while he is still a child. To do that, I must destroy that Muggle-loving fool that protected him when he was a child."

Grindelwald eyed Voldemort with intrigue apparent in his expression, "So, Dumbledore prevented you from harming this wizard while he was still a child, and now that he is grown, he is too much for you. Now, you have come back in time to destroy Dumbledore. What makes you think that you can defeat Dumbledore? You know that he is the Heir of Merlin."

Voldemort cackled, "I have already defeated him in my time, and he is not nearly as powerful in this time as he is in mine. Unfortunately, by the time that I defeated Dumbledore so that I could get to the young one, he was ready for me."

Grindelwald cackled, "Since, it is obvious by this story that I will be defeated, then I will be most glad to accept your aid. Let us defeat our foes together."

Voldemort flipped Grindelwald's wand back to him. Grindelwald caught it and then smiled cruelly. "Now, victory will be mine. I will order an attack, now." Grindelwald swept from the room, and left Voldemort alone.

Grindelwald's consciousness came back to the present, where he began musing to himself. "Once this battle is over, I must determine some way to deal with this Lord Voldemort. I must find his young self and destroy him before he can take over my position."

Grindelwald was broken from his musings by a voice that rang out challengingly, "You won't have to worry about Voldemort, Grindelwald. We will be ending your reign of terror right here and now."

Grindelwald looked up to find Albus Dumbledore and Hilda Hufflepuff standing in the chamber with him. He smiled, "I see that you have found your way past Voldemort."

Hilda smiled, "Since you had help from the future, we got help of our own. The wizard Voldemort fears came back to aid us. He is dueling Voldemort at this very moment."

Albus continued, "We will be dealing with you."

Grindelwald laughed, "We will see." Then, he drew his wand from the folds of his robe, and gave it a swish. Several suits of armor sprang into action, and a side door flew open and several security trolls marched into the room.

Albus and Hilda exchanged glances, and then went back to back to begin dealing with Grindelwald's minions. Albus conjured several statues which Hilda animated to defend them from the trolls, while they whittled the suits of armor down with hex after hex. During the exchange between the two forces, Grindelwald consistently spoke to them. "The two of you are no match for my power, alone. You have come without your two friends. Now, that I have the two of you, I will destroy you. Then, I will deal with the other two Heirs. You have been led astray by Potter. I can not be defeated by two of the supposed Heirs. I am the master."

Even though it was taking all of his concentration to counter the suits of armor and the trolls, Albus managed to reply, "We are champions of the light, Grindelwald. You will never defeat us."

Grindelwald burst into a shrill mocking laugh, "How do you figure that, Albus? I stand here without even exerting myself, while it is all you can do to stay alive against my minions."

Albus smiled to himself, "Simple, we are armed with the knowledge that we will win. Harry has already told us that we will be victorious this day."

Grindelwald laughed but not as mockingly. It was obvious that he was afraid that they were right. He continued speaking anyway, "That doesn't matter. Voldemort and this Harry coming back in time and interfering has upset the natural order of things. The future is not set, and the two of you can lose."

Hilda sighed and muttered under her breath to Albus, "What if he's right, Albus? What if we can't win?"

Albus shook his head as he doggedly continued to fight the seemingly endless stream of suits of armor, "Don't give up, Hilda. I love you, and we will get through this together."

Hilda smiled and began to fight with a renewed vigor. After another short period of battling Grindelwald's minions, in which Grindelwald began to throw curses into the melee, the room shook as an explosion rocked the castle. The shaking broke Grindelwald's concentration for a moment as he spun around to look out the window to find out what caused the disturbance. It was immediately obvious that part of the wall below the room where they were located had been blasted away. The lapse in concentration caused the suits of armor to stop moving. Albus and Hilda quickly took advantage of the lull in the attack to completely immobilize the trolls. Then, they turned their wands on Grindelwald. Both of them uttered Stunning Spells, "Stupefy." The two jets of red light arced towards Grindelwald.

However, the battle was not to be ended this easily. Grindelwald was not called the Dark Lord for no reason. He dove sideways and spun around to face his combatants while he was falling towards the floor. A whipping stab of his wand and the words, "Explodra." sent an Explosion Hex sailing towards Dumbledore. Albus was caught flat-footed, and it appeared as if he would be unable to dodge or block the curse in time.

Dumbledore's luck held, or didn't hold, depending on how you look at the situation. Hilda screamed, "NO!!" Then, she jumped in front of the hex, blocking it with her body. She was hurled through the air, and she slammed into the opposite wall with a sickening crunch.

Albus looked at her stricken with fear for her life, and started to go towards her. This was not to be for Grindelwald had rolled to his feet and reanimated the suits of armor which quickly renewed the attack on Albus. A great deal of conflicting emotions were racing through Albus' mind as he robotically fought the suits of armor. Finally, his inability to get to Hilda built up pressure within his soul until it broke the dam. Albus screamed out his rage and pain, "I will destroy you, Grindelwald." A mountainous ocean of energy began pouring off of Albus in waves of pure white light. The light decimated the remaining suits of armor, and sent Grindelwald scrambling for cover.

Once Grindelwald was able to look at Dumbledore again, he was shocked by the sight that met his eyes. Albus was standing in the center of the chamber bathed in a shimmering brilliance of light. It completely surrounded his body, and he literally seemed to radiate strength. Albus turned a steely-eyed gaze on Grindelwald and snarled, "You will pay for what you have done."

Elsewhere in the castle, Harry had just finished dealing with Voldemort, and headed out after Albus and Hilda. He sensed the sudden upsurge in energy, and swore beneath his breath, "Grindelwald must have really pissed Albus off for him to be giving off this kind of power." Harry quickened his pace as he headed for where he was sensing Albus's power coming from.

Back in the upper chamber, Grindelwald had stood up and assumed a dueling stance. Albus advanced on him, and the two of them began to trade curses back and forth. Albus finally hit Grindelwald with a Disarming Charm. Then, he stood over Grindelwald as he crumpled to the ground. Albus smiled maliciously, "Now, it is time for you to meet your end, Grindelwald." Grindelwald looked up into Albus' eyes one last time in defiance as Albus cast the Killing Curse, "Avada Kedavra." The jet of green light hit Grindelwald and he slumped sideways, lifeless. Albus didn't even wait to see if the spell hit. He was already rushing across the room to Hilda. He slid to the ground beside her, and gently pulled her into his lap. "Hilda, speak to me."

Hilda weakly opened her eyes, "Albus, I'm glad that you are okay."

Albus silently began to cry, and asked, "Why did you do that, my love?"

Hilda smiled, "I had to. You are the greatest hope for wizard kind. You have to protect Harry in the future. It is your destiny. This was mine." Hilda reached a hand up to Albus' face and gently stroked her hand down his cheek. "I have always loved you, Albus. I want you to remember me."

Albus shook his head, "I could never forget you, Hilda. You are my Soul Mate."

Hilda smiled one last time, and then her hand fell to her side as she lost consciousness and died. Albus hugged her body to him and wept.

Harry raced into the room just as Hilda died. He sighed, "I guess I'm too late."

Albus looked up at him and nodded, "To save Hilda, you are. The battle is over, though. Grindelwald is defeated."

Harry nodded and walked over to stand beside Dumbledore. He placed a hand on Dumbledore's shoulder, "You once let me break several of your possessions in your office after my godfather was killed during the war with Voldemort. If you feel that you need to take some of your anger out, I can think of no better way to repay you for everything that you will do for me than to stand here and listen."

Dumbledore smiled through his tears, "You are a good man, Harry. Your grandfather would be very proud of you."

Harry nodded, "I know. It is because of you. I would have never turned out to be the man that I am without you. I hope you know that."

"I'm sure that my future self does. I would tell you that I will never forget you, but I know that you are going to cast a Memory Charm on me." said Dumbledore.

Harry nodded, "I have no choice. I can't risk your knowledge of the future affecting your decisions. We can not afford to change anything. The consequences would be very grave."

“I know, Harry. It’s just hard to know that I have lost my beloved Hilda, and that I will not be able to remember the hope for the future that you have given me.”

Harry patted Dumbledore on the back, “You have your dark road to walk, just as I had to walk mine. The two of us became much better wizards for those dark roads. The pain of loss can be a better teacher than anything else. The only consolation that I can offer over Hilda’s death is that she died protecting you. That will save a lot of lives in the future. The only memorial that I can offer you is, She died well. That is something that few people can say.” Harry wiped an unshed tear from the corner of his eye.

Dumbledore looked down at Hilda’s body and sighed, “It is time for you to go isn’t it?”

Harry nodded, “Yes, it is. I can sense Nicholas and Grandfather approaching. I don’t want to have to perform a Memory Charm on them again, so I need to leave before they get here.”

“I will miss you, Harry.”

Harry chuckled, “Not forever. I will turn up before you know it. Obliviate.” Then, Harry slipped into the ethos to slide forward through time to return to the present that he had left.

Nicholas and William rushed into the room a moment later to find Dumbledore holding Hilda and weeping quietly. Nicholas gasped, “What happened?”

Dumbledore looked up at the two other Heirs, “She jumped in front of an Explosion Hex to save me.”

William slumped to the ground, “Is she gone?”

Dumbledore nodded, “Yes, she is.”

Nicholas had walked over to Grindelwald. He bent down beside him and checked for a pulse. He found nothing. He looked over and caught William’s eye. He nodded. William sighed from his place on the ground next to Dumbledore, “It’s over, then. The war is finally over.”

Dumbledore continued to shake as he wept over his beloved. Nicholas walked up behind him and placed his hands on his shoulders, “Albus, I don’t know what to tell you. I just really don’t know what to say.”

Dumbledore replied in a broken voice, “Say that she died well. That is all I ask.”

Nicholas and William exchanged glances and then they both said, “We would never dream of saying any differently, Albus. Hilda most certainly died well.”

16. The Altered Prophecy

With a resounding pop, Harry reverted to real time and appeared in Dumbledore's office. Albus was sitting behind his desk as usual with a quill out writing. He jumped in surprise at the sound of Harry returning to his office. Once he caught sight of Harry standing in the middle of his office, he visible relaxed. "Well, Mr. Potter, I see that you have returned from your journey."

Harry gave Albus a peculiar look at the imposed formality in his voice, "Yes, Albus, I have. I was successful at preventing Voldemort from killing you in the past."

The look that Harry had just given Dumbledore was returned as Albus eyed Harry, "Very well, Mr. Potter. I will call a meeting of the Order of the Phoenix. We would like for you to come as a guest and report on your activities in the past. I am sure that everyone will be interested in hearing what has occurred."

There were so many thing wrong with what Dumbledore said to Harry that he had no clue where to begin his questions. So, in order to buy some time to organize his thoughts, Harry said, "I am going to go back to Gryffindor Tower. I am going to take a nap. You can summon me when the Order is ready for me."

Harry turned to leave when Albus called him back, "Why would you go to Gryffindor Tower, Mr. Potter?"

Harry turned back around to face the Headmaster, "Why wouldn't I? That is where the dormitories are."

Dumbledore appeared to be completely perplexed with what Harry was saying, "You are the one that requested to be separated from the tower and have your own room."

Harry seemed surprised, "I did?"

Dumbledore nodded, "Yes, do you not remember, Mr. Potter?"

Harry shook his head, "I suppose not. Where are my rooms located?"

Dumbledore replied, "Your rooms are located just next to the Room of Requirement, so that you could be close to your training room."

Harry nodded, "Did I put a password on the door?"

Dumbledore continued to look at Harry as if he had grown an extra head, "Yes, Mr. Potter, the password is Phoenix Flight."

Harry sighed, "I need to go lie down. I will speak with you later, Albus." Harry turned and practically fled from the room with his thoughts in turmoil. He met McGonagall as he was coming out of the office past the gargyle. She nodded stiffly to him, and he half waved as he raced past her.

McGonagall continued on her way into Dumbledore's office. She spoke upon entering the door, "I see that the Potter boy has returned from his journey."

Dumbledore nodded, "Yes, Minerva, he has. I'm worried, though."

Minerva asked, "Why?"

"There is something wrong with the boy. He addressed me by my first name, which is a level of familiarity that he has never attempted to use with me."

McGonagall shrugged, "I have always thought that the boy was somewhat odd. Now, that he is traveling through time, I can only assume that he will get stranger."

Dumbledore shook his head, "Its not just that. He seemed as if he was confused by the way I was speaking to him as well. Not to mention that he seemed utterly shocked that he did not sleep in Gryffindor Tower."

McGonagall seemed surprised, "The boy has had his own room for almost two years now. How could he possibly forget something of that magnitude?"

Albus replied, "He wouldn't. I think that something is most definitely wrong. I am summoning the Order this evening to hear his report, but I will be telling all of them to remain on their guard. I believe that Tom has had some sort of effect on the young man. The war may be coming to an end."

Minerva smiled, "We can only hope."

After leaving Dumbledore's office, Harry headed toward the corridor with the portrait of Barnabas the Barmy and his tutu clad trolls. While he was walking he heard a voice calling his name from behind him.

"Potter. Hey, Potter."

Turning around expecting to come face to face with Malfoy, Harry was shocked to see Ron Weasley. Harry smiled, "Hey, Ron. I'm glad I ran into you." Harry held out a hand to shake Ron's.

Ron eyed Harry's hand for a moment before sniffing dismissively and saying, "It's about time that you got back, Potter. The Quidditch match against Slytherin is next weekend. We only have one more practice before the game. I expect you to be at practice if you want to play on Saturday." Ron brushed past Harry without another word.

Harry stared after Ron's retreating back in disbelief. What was going on? Harry just shook his head and said to himself, "Maybe when I wake up I will find out this is just a dream." Harry continued to walk down the corridor till he came to the portrait of a phoenix that guarded the doorway to his room. He gave it the password, "Phoenix Flight." The painting opened to reveal an archway that Harry climbed through into the bleakest bedroom that he had ever seen. He asked himself, "What is this?" The room was completely devoid of any type of ornamentation. The walls were bare, and the bed was as plain as it could have been. Harry continued to speak out loud to himself, "Why would I have ever wanted this room? If I was going to have my own room, it could have at least been something that other people would have liked to visit." Harry sighed. Then, dispirited, he laid down on the bed and quickly drifted off to sleep.

While Harry was taking his nap, Dumbledore was in his office contacting various members of the Order of the Phoenix to let them know that they should be at the castle after dinner that evening.

A few hours later, Harry awoke to find Dobby in his room. Harry smiled, "Hey, Dobby. I'm glad you're here. I could use a friendly face."

Dobby sighed, and said, "I am glad to be seeing Harry Potter in one piece."

Harry peered closer at the normally excitable house-elf and realized that the elf appeared to be extremely forlorn. Puzzled, Harry continued to stare at the house-elf, who began fidgeting under the scrutiny. Finally Dobby asked, "What can I get Harry Potter for dinner, sir?"

Harry chuckled, "Why do you need to get my dinner, Dobby? I can just walk down to the Great Hall and eat with everyone else."

Dobby gasped, "Harry Potter would eat with everyone else?"

Harry's eyes widened in surprise at this outburst, "Why wouldn't I eat with everyone else?"

Dobby shook his head, "Harry Potter has not eaten in the Great Hall in over a year. Harry Potter is always taking his meals privately."

Harry paused in bewilderment at this revelation. Then, he burst out, "What the hell is going on here?"

Dobby stepped back in alarm as Harry exploded, "Dobby is not knowing, Harry Potter, sir. Dobby is only knowing what Harry Potter usually tells Dobby."

Harry smiled down at the diminutive house-elf, "I'm sorry for blowing up, Dobby, but something very weird is going on around here, and I intend to find out what it is."

Dobby nodded, "Dobby is wishing Harry Potter luck, sir."

Harry patted Dobby on the head as he stood up and walked past to leave the room. Dobby followed after asking, "Where is Harry Potter going, sir?"

Harry called back over his shoulder, "To the Great Hall to eat."

Dobby gasped in surprise, and then smiled to himself, "Maybe Harry Potter is going to be alright after all." With a pop, the house-elf vanished from the hallway and reappeared in the kitchens to help the other house-elves with their chores.

As Harry headed for the Great Hall, he began receiving a lot of strange looks from other students. They were all looking at him the same way that Albus had been looking at him earlier. It seemed as if everyone thought he had suddenly sprouted another head out of his shoulder. Harry ignored these stares and continued on his way. Then, he saw Ginny and Hermione. Harry brightened immediately, "Ginny! Hermione!"

At the sound the two girls turned to see Harry racing towards them with his arms spread wide. Ginny squeaked in alarm and surprise before turning and running away. Once Harry saw Ginny's reaction to his approach, he stopped, stunned. He asked Hermione, "What's wrong with Ginny?"

Hermione snorted, "Like you don't know, Potter. You stay away from Ginny. She doesn't need trouble like you around." Then, Hermione turned around and stormed away in Ginny's wake.

Harry stood in the corridor staring after the retreating form of Hermione in stunned disbelief, "What the hell is going on?"

McGonagall appeared beside him, "Language, Potter. You will have to report to the Headmaster for punishment after dinner. Now, return to your room."

Harry looked up at his Transfiguration teacher, "What? Why would I go back to my room? Its dinner time."

McGonagall looked down at Harry in apparent alarm, "You always eat by yourself. We haven't seen you in the Great Hall since the battle in the Department of Mysteries."

Harry put his head into his hands, "I wish someone would tell me what is going on. I don't understand any of this. Everything has changed, but it shouldn't have. I stopped Tom before he could do any damage. He didn't change the war."

Albus appeared beside Harry, "Perhaps he made no drastic alterations, but if what I believe to be the case is true, then something very minor has been changed. That would explain why you know nothing of what is transpiring in this time. It would seem to me that your knowledge of events are from a timeline that no longer exists."

Minerva looked at Albus as if he were insane, "What are you talking about, Dumbledore?"

Harry replied, "He is saying, Minerva, that the sequence of events that I know to have happened have been altered by mine and Voldemort's journey back in time, and while the sequence of events have changed around all of you, it has not changed around me because my power allows me to remove myself from the natural flow of time."

McGonagall shook her head, "I have no idea what you just said, Potter."

Harry said grimly, "You will, Minerva. I will explain everything at the Order meeting this evening. Then, I am going to go have a little meeting with Tom. I have to see if he remembers events as they were or as they are."

Even Dumbledore appeared bewildered by this statement, "What do you mean? Are you suggesting that I let you go speak with Voldemort?"

Harry snorted, "I am not suggesting anything, Albus. I am saying that I will be going to see Tom before the evening is over."

Albus shook his head, "I am afraid that I cannot allow that, Mr. Potter. It would be suicidal."

Harry laughed, "I fail to see that what you think about me going matters. There is not a witch or wizard on this planet that can stop me from going."

McGonagall scolded, "You are being impertinent, Potter. As strong as you are for your age, you are no match for a full-grown wizard, especially one of Albus' power."

Harry really laughed at this one, "Things must be more drastically different than I thought at first. I must be weak in this timeframe, because in my time, you would never dream of questioning my power."

Albus eyed Harry appraisingly, "We will discuss this later with the rest of the Order. For now, let us enjoy our dinner."

Harry smiled, "Very well, Albus. Let us enjoy our dinner."

Albus smiled at the young man in front of him, "You are so much like you were before."

"Before what?" asked Harry.

Albus replied, "Before I told you the Prophecy. You have not been the same since."

Harry appeared to go into deep thought before following Albus and Minerva into the Great Hall. Harry sat down at the Gryffindor table beside Neville Longbottom. Neville looked over at Harry as if he were crazy, "What are you doing in the Great Hall, Harry?"

Harry smiled, "Finally somebody calls me by my first name."

Neville said somewhat reluctantly, "I have always called you by your first name, Harry."

Harry continued to smile, "Thanks, Neville. You are a good friend."

Neville appeared to be somewhat surprised, "Do you consider me to be a friend, Harry?"

Harry nodded, "Of course I do, Neville. Now, let's eat."

Harry continued to receive odd stares throughout the course of the dinner, but he studiously ignored them. Once dinner was over and the students began filing out of the Great Hall, Albus walked over to Harry from the Head table, "Mr. Potter, it is time for the Order to meet. Follow me."

Harry nodded and allowed Albus to lead him towards his office. Harry walked in to find most of the Order already present. The entire Weasley crew minus Ron and Ginny were present. Along with them were Tonks, Snape, Remus, McGonagall, Dedalus Diggle, Hestia Jones, Sturgis Podmore, Mad-Eye Moody, and Kingsley Shacklebolt.

Albus nodded to all of them as he entered the office and walked around his desk to sit down. Harry took a seat next to the door. Everyone greeted him in a detached sort of way. Dumbledore began the meeting, "We have much to discuss. Mr. Potter has returned from the journey I sent him back in time on."

Harry interrupted, "What are you talking about? You didn't send me back in time. I went myself."

Everyone in the room paused in shock at the statement. Snape sneered, "What do you think you are talking about, Potter? You don't have the power to travel through time on your own. You are just as arrogant as your father."

Harry turned a fierce gaze on Snape, "I see that your attitude has returned to what it once was, Severus. I guess in this timeline I haven't warned you not to speak ill of my father. I think that now would be the perfect time to give you that warning."

Snape sneered again, "Do not be so impertinent, Potter. I will not tolerate your lip."

Harry chuckled menacingly, "You have our roles reversed, Severus. It is I who will not tolerate your lip." Harry waved one of his hands, and Snape was thrown from his chair into the wall where he stuck.

Everyone in the room jumped up and drew their wands, pointing them at Harry immediately. Albus interrupted all of them, "Enough. Harry, how did you do that?"

Harry smiled, "It was just a Banishing Charm on Severus combined with a Sticking Charm on the wall behind him."

Albus shook his head, "You do not understand. How did you do it without a wand?"

Harry shrugged, "I don't need a wand to do magic. You should know that by now. I have been able to do wandless magic for quite some time now."

Arthur Weasley protested, "What is he talking about, Albus? Harry has never been able to wandless magic."

Albus smiled, "This one can."

Mad-Eye Moody asked, "What do you mean this one?"

Albus continued to smile, "This is not the Harry Potter that I sent back in time. He is from some alternate timeline."

Harry snorted, "I hate to break it to all of you, but this is the alternate timeline. The one I am from is the original. This time and the events that led to them should not even exist. I have been feeling the ethers of time since Albus insinuated that something had changed. I just wish that I could figure out what happened that caused the timeline to skew so horribly."

Albus nodded to Harry, "Well, Mr. Potter, why don't you begin by telling us what happened while you were in the past, and then you can tell us what is different about this timeline from the one you know."

Harry nodded, "Okay, but I wish all of you would stop calling me Mr. Potter. My name is Harry." Everyone in the room nodded. Harry took a deep breath before diving into the story. "Well, when I went back in time it was to 1945 during the height of the war with Grindelwald. I met with all of the Heirs that were alive at the time."

Bill Weasley interrupted, "What Heirs? What are you talking about?"

Albus explained, "Harry is the Heir of Gryffindor, while I am the Heir of Merlin, just as Lord Voldemort is the Heir of Slytherin. During the war with Grindelwald, Harry's grandfather served with my beloved Hilda, and my friend Nicholas Flamel, alongside me. The three of them were respectively the Heirs of Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, and Ravenclaw. All five Heirs were alive at that time. Since Hilda and I had no children the Hufflepuff line ended with her. Nicholas's son died before he could have children, so the Ravenclaw line ended with him."

Fred and George chorused, "So, does that mean the line of Merlin ends with you, Professor?"

Harry shook his head, "No, because Godric Gryffindor was Merlin's Great-Grandson. I am the Heir of Merlin as well."

Charlie said, "Since you have to die, Harry, doesn't that mean the Gryffindor line will end with you?"

Harry looked at Charlie in puzzlement, "What do you mean I have to die? I'm not going to die anytime soon."

Charlie responded, "What about the Prophecy?"

Harry's eyes narrowed, "Albus, do you have your Pensieve?"

Dumbledore nodded, "Of course. Why?"

Harry responded, "Put your memory of the Prophecy into it. I will put my memory of the Prophecy in my Pensieve. Then, we will play them. If I am not mistaken there will be a difference."

Albus asked, "Where are you going to get another Pensieve, Harry?"

"My Dad's."

"That's at Potter Manor, and the Floo connection to that house has been shut off." said Dumbledore.

Harry grinned, "What do I need the Floo network for? I will just Apparate over there and pick it up."

McGonagall protested, "Mr. Potter, you cannot Apparate on Hogwart's grounds."

Harry smiled, "You can't, but I can." Harry disappeared and then reappeared a few moments later holding his father's Pensieve.

Everyone in the room gasped as Harry disappeared. Then, when he returned with the Pensieve, a babble erupted in the room. Harry raised his hands for quiet, "Be quiet, you lot, and I'll explain." The babble quieted down slowly, and everyone returned to their seats. "I can Apparate around the wards that govern the castle."

Tonks asked, "How?"

Harry shrugged, "How do you breathe? I just can."

Albus nodded, "Back to the subject at hand. Let us continue with our exercise." Harry nodded in reply and the two wizards each drew memories out of their heads. One with a wand, the other with his finger.

Harry motioned to Albus, "You first."

Albus waved his wand over the Pensieve and his memory of the Prophecy came into focus. A young Sybyll Trelawney rose out of the Pensieve. She began to speak.

THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES...BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRICE DEFIED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES... AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWS NOT, AND NEITHER OF THEM CAN SURVIVE AND LET THE WORLD LIVE...THE TWO MUST DIE FOR THE WORLD TO SURVIVE... THEY WILL DESTROY ONE ANOTHER OR THE DARK LORD WILL DESTROY THE WORLD... THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD WILL BE BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES...

Harry snapped his fingers, "I knew it. That would explain everything."

Remus asked, "What does this explain?"

Harry replied, "You'll see. Watch." Harry waved his hand over his Pensieve, and another image of Sybyll Trelawney rose up and began to speak a very different message than the one they had just heard.

THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES ... BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRICE DEFIED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES ... AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWS NOT ... AND EITHER MUST DIE AT THE HAND OF THE OTHER FOR NEITHER CAN LIVE WHILE THE OTHER SURVIVES ... THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD WILL BE BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES...

Everyone sat staring in shock and amazement at the difference in the two Prophecies. Harry smiled, "Do you see what I am talking about?"

Albus nodded for everyone, since most of the group was stricken speechless. Then, he smiled, "This is a much better version of the Prophecy. It allows you to win."

Harry nodded, "I know. This explains why everything is different from the sequence of events that I know. Albus, you said that I changed after you told me the Prophecy. I'm sure that I wanted to withdraw from everyone."

Everyone nodded, "You didn't want to have anything to do with anybody. You even pushed Ginny away." said Fred and George.

Harry laughed, "I can see myself doing something like that. I just wish I knew what Voldemort did that caused the Prophecy to change."

Arthur said, "Well, why don't you tell us what happened in the past. You said that you went back to the war with Grindelwald."

Harry nodded, "I went back to just before the final battle between Albus, Hilda, and Grindelwald." Harry waved his hand and Albus blinked in surprise. "That should make it where you can help me tell the story, Albus."

Kingsley looked back and forth between the two of them, "What just happened?"

Harry smiled, "I just removed the Memory Charm that I placed on him before I returned to the present."

Albus sighed, "These are memories that I would prefer not to relive, Harry."

Harry smiled and stepped over to Albus' desk. He placed his hand on Albus' shoulder, "You will be glad that you did. She died well."

Albus wiped a tear from the corner of his eye, "Yes, she did."

Mad-Eye said gruffly, "Can we get a move-on? The rest of us would like to know what is going on."

Harry began, "When I followed Voldemort back in time, I arrived in the middle of a battle. I dove behind a rock, so that I would have time to figure out which side I was supposed to be helping. Then, I saw Albus leading a contingent of wizards into the battle. I jumped right into the midst of them, and joined in the fight. We drove the other wizards from the field. After the battle was over, Albus sent everyone back to their posts, and he, Nicholas, and I went back to a tent to talk. I managed to convince them of who I was and where I was from."

Albus took up the story as Harry paused for breath, "Then, Nicholas and I took him to the main command area, where we met with Hilda and William. Harry retold his story to them, and between the three of us, we managed to convince them of what was going on. Then, the five of us sat around and devised a plan to take Grindelwald's fortress."

Harry took over, "Albus, Hilda, and I were to sneak into the fortress, while Nicholas and my grandfather led the frontal offensive on Grindelwald's forces. We waited until they launched the attack and then the three of us entered the castle. I let them get into Grindelwald's chamber, where Voldemort was waiting for them. I stepped out and challenged him, which allowed the two of them to continue on and face Grindelwald. I defeated Voldemort and forced him to return to the present, and then I headed after Hilda and Albus. While I was on my way to meet up with them, I felt an extreme upswing in Albus' power. I hurried, but I was too late."

Kingsley asked, "Too late for what?"

Dumbledore answered, "By the time Harry had arrived, Hilda was dead, and I had killed Grindelwald."

Harry nodded grimly, "Then, I spoke to Albus for a moment, but I couldn't stay long since I knew that Nicholas and my grandfather were on their way. I had performed a Memory Charm on them before we had left the camp. I couldn't allow them to see me again. So, I performed a Memory Charm on Albus, and then returned to the present."

Bill Weasley said, "I don't get something. The way you are talking, you only spent a day or so back in time." Harry nodded, so Bill continued, "That doesn't make any sense. You have been gone for about a month."

Harry smiled, "When you go back in time, you build up tension in the timeline. That tension has to be relieved as you return to the present. The farther back in time you go, the stronger the tension build-up. I went back over fifty years. So, there had to be a period of time that I simply did not exist in to relieve the tension that was created by my entrance into the past. I just drifted on the ethers of time until I felt the tension dissipate. Then, I returned to real time."

The entire assembled group shook their heads in puzzlement. Charlie Weasley smiled, "We'll take your word for it. I don't think any of us are ever going to understand that mess. It is just a little bit too complicated for me." The rest of the group nodded in agreement.

Mad-Eye Moody said gruffly, “Now, what do we do?”

Harry smiled, “Well, I am going to go drop in on our infamous Dark Lord and talk to him. He won’t be happy with the turn of events, because the new Prophecy still requires that he die.”

Snape interrupted, “I don’t see that. The Prophecy allows him to win.”

Harry shook his head, “No, the Prophecy that you know allows him to win against the Harry that was part of this timeline. That Harry doesn’t have an iota of the power that I possess. Voldemort knows that he can’t kill me, so by this version of the Prophecy we will both die. That is unacceptable to him. He would prefer the original to this.”

Sturgis Podmore spoke up timidly, “So, where does that leave us?”

Harry sighed, “It leaves us in a position of waiting. Voldemort will attempt to change things again. He will make another trip back in time, and I will just have to be ready. When he goes, I will follow. Hopefully, while we are in the past, I will be able to repair the damage that he did to the sequence of time. If not, I may just have to kill him and hope for the best.”

Molly Weasley protested, “That means that you will have to die.”

Harry shook his head, “Not necessarily. While we are in the past, I am not within the fabric of time, and I will not be governed by the Prophecy. However, killing Voldemort in the past will have unforeseen consequences. I’m just not for sure what they will be.”

Albus said, “Then, you can not risk it.”

Harry shrugged, “I may not have a choice. The alternative to that chance might be even worse. I promise that it will be a last ditch effort.”

Dumbledore sighed, and then nodded. “I think that this should be all for the evening. I think that we have all seen and heard enough this evening to last us a lifetime.”

The rest of the Order nodded in acquiescence before getting up to leave. Harry nodded to everyone as he walked from the room.

17. Quidditch Begins

After the Order meeting had disbanded and Harry had returned to his room, he decided that it was time to have his conversation with Tom. Harry fell into a deep concentration and sent out a tendril of himself to locate Voldemort. Once he did so, it was obvious that Voldemort was in a towering temper. Harry smiled at Voldemort's rage. Then, he Apparated to the room where Voldemort was standing. The six Death Eaters in the room jumped in surprise when Harry appeared. They all drew their wands immediately, but Harry merely waved his hand in a circle while saying, "Stupefy." Each of the six Death Eaters fell over stunned. By the time that Harry had returned his gaze to Voldemort, Tom had his wand aimed right at the bridge of Harry's nose. Harry chuckled in amusement, "Put your wand away, Tom. You know that you can not do anything to me. I have come here to talk."

Voldemort took a step back, but did not lower his wand, "What do you want, Potter?"

Harry shrugged as he conjured a chair to sit in. Once he was comfortable, Harry said, "I am surprised that you are being this patient, Tom. I would have expected you to attempt hexing me by now."

Voldemort sneered, "I have already discovered that to be useless, Potter. I will not waste my energy."

Harry smiled, "Suit yourself. I am here to inform you that you failed."

Voldemort seemed to shake with rage, but he did nothing. He merely said, "I am aware of that, Potter. However, things have changed. My Death Eaters were never captured at the Ministry of Magic. My operatives are still in place, and there is little that you can do about it, Potter."

Harry chuckled again, "I think that you underestimate me, Tom. Although, I will admit that you have managed to screw up my life with your exploits in the past. Its nothing that I can't fix, but it is still annoying."

Voldemort laughed cruelly, "At least I accomplished something for my effort."

Harry sighed and mentally counted to ten, "You accomplished something more than that, Tom. You have managed to change the Prophecy."

Voldemort almost dropped his wand in surprise, "What did you say, Potter? What do you mean? How did I change the Prophecy?"

Harry laughed shortly, "Not in any way that helps you. I will let you hear just in case you're curious." Harry pulled his Pensieve out of his robes and waved his hand over it. Sybill Trelawney's image rose out of the Pensieve and began to speak.

THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES...BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRICE DEFIED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES... AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWS NOT, AND NEITHER OF THEM CAN SURVIVE AND LET THE WORLD LIVE...THE TWO MUST DIE FOR THE WORLD TO SURVIVE... THEY WILL DESTROY ONE ANOTHER OR THE DARK LORD WILL DESTROY THE WORLD... THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD WILL BE BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES...

Harry smiled as the image of Sybill Trelawney faded back down into the Pensieve, "I think that you should notice the difference from the original."

Voldemort smiled maliciously, "Yes, this means that you won't kill me because you have to die to do so."

Harry snorted, "Don't tempt me. As soon as I deal with all of your followers, so that there will be no one to carry on your legacy, I fully intend to kill you. Dying will be a small price to pay for insuring that the line of Salazar Slytherin ends with you."

Voldemort paled, "I think that you are bluffing, Potter."

Harry smiled, "Remember something, Tom. I don't have to kill you to make sure you never harm anyone again. I could just take your wand, destroy it, and then bind you for eternity in the frigid wastes of Antartica."

Voldemort sneered, "You won't try it, Potter."

Harry shrugged, "Perhaps not. There would be too much chance of you getting loose. So, I guess that I will just have to finish off your followers, and then kill you. Till that day, Tom. Adieu." Then, Harry stood up and disappeared.

Voldemort looked at the stunned Death Eaters lying around on the floor after Potter had left in disdain, "Fools," he muttered. Then, Voldemort waved his wand around and said, "Enervate." The six Death Eaters stood up.

One of them asked, "What happened, My Lord?"

Voldemort snarled, "Potter came into my inner sanctum. I want you to find out how he broke the wards."

The Death Eater nodded, "Yes, My Lord." Then, he departed from the room.

Voldemort turned to another one of the Death Eaters, "Bella, I want you to arrange for a spy on Potter. He will bear some watching."

Bellatrix Lestrange paused, "I don't understand, My Lord. Potter has never been a threat. You said so yourself."

Voldemort whirled around and pointed his wand at Bellatrix, "Crucio." Bellatrix screamed in agony as she fell to the ground writhing in pain. Voldemort released the curse after a few moments. He screamed at Bellatrix, "Never question my orders, Bella. The Potter boy is the most dangerous adversary that I will ever face. Now, carry out my commands!"

Bellatrix drug herself up off the floor, and bowed, "Yes, my Lord." Then, she drug herself from the room.

Voldemort turned to another of the assembled Death Eaters that remained, "Lucius, I want you to contact your son. I want him to keep an eye on the things that are going on at Hogwarts. I expect there to be a great deal of activity occurring at the castle soon."

Lucius bowed, "I will contact him immediately. You can count on my son, my Lord. He will be a loyal Death Eater."

Voldemort nodded as Lucius turned and walked from the room. Then, he dismissed the remaining members of his Inner Circle and sat down in a chair with the bitter taste of defeat in his mouth.

Harry returned to his room in Hogwarts, and looked around. He sighed, "Well, first things first. I have to do some rearranging in here. This is positively dreary." Harry spent the rest of the evening rearranging his room to his liking. Then, he went to bed.

The next morning, Harry awoke to sunshine streaming in the window to his room. He got up and showered before putting on his robes and then heading down to the Great Hall for breakfast. He sat by Neville, and received many odd glances. Neville, however greeted him warmly. Harry grinned and began to throw eggs onto his plate. The two Gryffindor boys sat and ate breakfast while discussing Quidditch and classes. Harry quickly realized that he wasn't taking the same classes when he mentioned Potions with Snape and Neville looked horrified. Harry decided that he needed to get a copy of his timetable from McGonagall before trying to attend classes. After breakfast was over, Harry walked up to Minerva and said quietly, "Professor McGonagall, I need a copy of my schedule."

She turned to look at him in dismay, "Don't you have one, Mr. Potter?"

Harry shrugged, "I'm sure I do, but I don't know where it is. It was obvious from my conversation with Neville that I don't have the same schedule that I know."

Minerva smiled, "Follow me to my office, Mr. Potter. I will retrieve a copy of your schedule for you."

Harry turned to follow her down the corridor while saying, "Thank you, Professor."

The two of them reached her office, where McGonagall retrieved a file and duplicated a copy of Harry's schedule for him. Harry picked it up and then said, "I have another problem."

"What is that, Mr. Potter?" asked McGonagall.

"I don't have a wand. I don't think that it would be a good idea just to start doing wandless magic in front of the rest of the student body considering they have no idea that I can. It might be a little surprising." said Harry.

McGonagall nodded, "I suppose not. I think that it would be feasible to get you a wand. You will have to go to Ollivanders."

Harry nodded, "I figured that I would get permission before going."

McGonagall eyed Harry grimly, "I'm not sure I like the idea of you being able to do as you please, Mr. Potter. It makes me think that you will be like your father was at school. I shudder to think of what would happen if you pulled the pranks James did."

Harry chuckled, "The Slytherins would never be the same again."

McGonagall shook her head, "The castle still hasn't recovered from the Weasley twins."

Harry laughed, "This castle will never recover from those two."

McGonagall actually laughed briefly, "I would imagine not. Those fireworks were quite a show two years ago."

Harry smiled, "Yes, they were. I'll pop over to Diagon Alley and get some kind of wand from Ollivander. I'll be back in time for class."

McGonagall nodded, "Very well, Mr. Potter. I will see you at dinner."

Harry nodded and then Disapparated from the castle. He appeared with a pop in the Leaky Cauldron. Everyone turned to look at him as he appeared. Several of them started when they saw Harry Potter appear. Tom, the barkeeper smiled and nodded to him, "What can I do for you, Mr. Potter."

Harry smiled, "Nothing today, Tom. I just have to run pick something up in Diagon Alley."

Several people stopped Harry in order to shake his hand. He patiently exchanged pleasantries with each of them, and then tapped the bricks in the wall with his finger. The archway opened up to allow him access to Diagon Alley. Harry walked down the street and bumped into none other than Lucius Malfoy. Malfoy yelled, "Watch where you're going!" Then, he realized who had bumped into him, "Potter."

Harry smiled, "Well, well, what do we have here? If I had known that I would get the opportunity to kill you again, I might have fiddled with time myself."

Lucius' eyes darkened, "What are you talking about, Potter?"

Harry laughed, "So, I guess old Tom didn't let you in on the little secret. He must think that you are too daft to handle it."

Lucius drew his wand and pointed it at Harry, "I will kill you, Potter."

Harry laughed, "Now, Lucius, you don't want to call undue attention to yourself. You wouldn't want anyone to find out about that black smudge of a tattoo on your arm. It wouldn't do for you to be arrested on suspicion of Death Eater activity."

Lucius growled, "Get out of my way, Potter. I have work to attend to."

Harry swept out of the way, "By all means continue with what you were doing. Just remember, I will be watching."

Lucius gave Harry a scathing look before walking away. Harry continued to chuckle to himself as he walked toward Ollivanders. He entered the dark and seemingly dingy store, where he was immediately greeted by Ollivander himself, "Ah, Mr. Potter. What can I do for you today?"

Harry replied, "I need a wand, sir."

Ollivander's eyes narrowed, "What do you need another wand for, Mr. Potter? Has something happened to your other one?"

Harry nodded, "There has been a little problem with my other wand. I need one immediately since I have class in about half an hour."

Ollivander nodded and began taking measurements with the silver tape. Harry allowed him to do this. Once Ollivander was finished he climbed up to one of the shelves and brought out another wand. He said, "We will try something similar to your original wand, first." He handed the wand to Harry, "Try this. Ash and Phoenix feather. Twelve and a half inches."

Harry grasped the wand, and made sparks shoot out of the end of it with wandless magic. He smiled, "I think this one will do just fine."

Ollivander smiled, "A match on the first try. That is remarkable indeed." Ollivander handed the case to Harry. "That will be eight Galleons, Mr. Potter." Harry paid the bill and then stepped out into an alley before Apparating back to his room at Hogwarts. Then, he hurried toward his first class of the morning, Double Defense Against the Dark Arts.

Harry arrived in the Defense room with several minutes to spare before class. He sat down and inspected his timetable more closely. He discovered that the only differences were in the fact that he was no longer taking Potions or Herbology, and had replaced Potions with Care of Magical Creatures. He looked around as the class entered. His friends were present in the room.

After a few more moments, Tonks came into the room. She began the class by taking roll. Then, they started working on how to counter a Disillusionment Charm. Tonks turned to Harry, "Would you be so kind as to help me, Mr. Potter?"

Harry grinned, "I'd love to, Professor. What do you need me to do?"

The rest of the class stared in shock at the bright and sunny attitude that Harry was presenting. Ron and Hermione exchanged glances. This sounded like the old Harry. The one they had been friends with. The one that had seemingly died so long ago. Neville caught the glances that they exchanged and chuckled. He leaned over to Ron and whispered, "He's back."

Ron whispered back, "Maybe. We'll see."

Hermione just looked hopeful.

By this time, Tonks had explained to Harry what she wanted him to do. Then, she turned to the rest of the class. "If all of you will stand up and move to the sides of the room, I will move the tables out of our way."

The class complied and then she continued explaining, "I am going to Disillusion myself, while Mr. Potter has his eyes closed. Then, he will be trying to determine where I am and defending himself from my attacks." She turned to Harry, "Mr. Potter, are you ready?"

Harry grinned and raised his wand, "You bet I am. The question is are you ready, Professor?"

Tonks returned his grin in a challenging way, "We shall see, Mr. Potter. We shall see." The rest of the class gaped at Harry in amazement. This was more interaction than he had shown in well over a year.

Harry turned around and closed his eyes. Tonks cast a Disillusionment Charm on herself and then pressed herself up against the wall. Harry opened his eyes after counting to twenty, and turned around. His eyes immediately began darting around to look for a sign of Tonks. She attacked almost immediately, "Stupefy."

Harry went into a forward roll that got him out of the way of the curse, and spun while still rolling on the ground. He yelled, "Petrificus Totalus." The Full Body Bind caught Tonks in the leg and froze her stiff as a board. Harry stood up easily and walked over to Tonks. He pretended to point his wand at her while he waved his left hand and muttered, "Finite Incantato."

Tonks removed the Disillusionment Charm from herself and then smiled, "That was an excellent display, Mr. Potter. Ten points to Gryffindor." The assembled students in the class muttered amongst themselves as Tonks levitated the chairs and tables back into place. She began lecturing again as Harry took his seat, "As you can see, the key to fighting an opponent that has been Disillusioned is to wait for them to attack and reveal themselves. Then, as long as you manage to avoid the initial attack, you can locate them and counterattack. To do this you will need superb senses. A Hearing Enhancement Charm would be a good defensive technique in this situation." She turned to Harry, "Did you use one, Mr. Potter?"

Harry shook his head, "I didn't need one. You breathe too loud, and I have excellent ears."

Tonks gaped in astonishment at the candor apparent in Harry's voice as he grinned cheekily at her. The rest of the class just sat stone silent and stared at the two of them in amazement. Things remained that way until the bell rang a few moments later. Tonks said loudly, "Twelve inches of parchment on the Disillusionment Charm and its applications in battle. Due by next class. Mr. Potter, I would like for you to remain after class."

Harry finished putting away his books as he waited for the rest of the class to leave. Once they had left, Tonks waved her wand at the door, and it shut quietly. She looked at Harry closely, "You really are different, aren't you?"

Harry chuckled, "From what you are accustomed to. This is what I would have been like had the Prophecy been something different."

Tonks asked, "Aren't you worried that the Prophecy as it exists is what governs this time?"

Harry shook his head, "I don't have to worry about facing Tom under the guidelines of this Prophecy." "Why?"

Harry smirked, "Simple. Tom wants to kill me more than anything. He knows that he can't do that without dying himself. He's not willing to do that, so he will attempt time travel again. I just have to wait, and then follow."

Tonks sighed, "I wish things could be different."

Harry laughed, "They will be and you will not even remember that this occurred. I am going to find out what Tom altered and fix it."

"Isn't that dangerous?" asked Tonks.

Harry shrugged, "As long as I don't irritate the Spirit of Time, then everything will be alright."

"The Spirit of Time?"

Harry nodded, "Every province of magic is governed by a different power that can manifest itself as a spirit. The magical fabric that governs time can't be upset too much or it will manifest itself as the Spirit of Time and destroy the one that caused the distortion. I just have to be careful."

Tonks sat down at her desk, "As much as I would like to continue this conversation, Harry, I have a class to teach."

Harry grinned, "At least you're calling me Harry. I was beginning to get tired of this Potter business. I'll see you later, Nymphadora."

As Harry started for the door, Tonks leaped up, "I have told you to never call me by my first name, Harry."

Harry smiled cheekily, "In the other timeline, I get away with it."

Tonks looked at him suspiciously, “Why would I let you?”

“I jumped in front of a Killing Curse and an Explosion Hex for you.” said Harry simply.

Tonks looked amazed, “Really?”

Harry nodded, “At the beginning of my sixth year.”

Tonks appeared to contemplate for a few moments and then said, “Just don’t do it in front of anyone else.”

“Done. I’ll see you later, Nymphadora.” Then, he walked from the room. Tonks shook her fist at him as he left.

Harry went back to his room and finished the Defense homework before heading down to lunch. He sat by Neville again and the two struck up a conversation about the Defense class. The two were talking animatedly, and basically ignoring all the amazed stares that Harry was receiving. Although, Harry was aware of what was going on around him. Ron, Hermione, and Ginny were whispering back and forth while shooting him glances and occasionally pointing. Harry assumed Ron and Hermione were filling Ginny in on what had happened in Defense class. Ginny appeared to be confused and amazed at the same time. Harry risked throwing a glance down towards the three of them. He caught Ginny’s eye, and smiled broadly. A smile twitched at the corners of Ginny’s mouth before she quickly looked down at her plate.

Once lunch was over, Neville and Harry got up and headed for the Charms corridor to get to class early. Ron and Hermione followed a short distance behind. Harry and Neville walked into Charms class to find Professor Flitwick already standing on top of his desk. Flitwick had been hearing rumors flying about the change in Harry’s attitude over the weekend, but this was the first time that he had come face to face with the young man. He decided to test the waters and actually greet him. “Good afternoon, Mr. Potter.”

Harry smiled and returned warmly, “The same to you, Professor. What do you have planned for class, today?”

Flitwick smiled and said, “We will be discussing wards, Mr. Potter.”

Harry nodded, “Cool.” He looked around, “I wish the rest of the class would hurry up.” Flitwick chuckled under his breath as Harry and Neville took seats in the front. The rest of the class filed in and sat down.

Flitwick began the lecture, “Today, we will be discussing the use and application of various wards. Then, we will begin working on how to cast different wards on both items and locations.” The rest of the class was spent with Flitwick explaining various wards and their applications. After class was over, Ron and Hermione approached Harry and Neville.

Ron said hesitantly, “Harry?”

Harry chuckled at something Neville had just said before turning to Ron and Hermione, “What’s up?”

The two exchanged glances and then Hermione asked, “Are you okay?”

Harry laughed, “Of course I am. Why wouldn’t I be okay?”

Ron said, “Its just that... well... you seem different.”

Harry smiled, “I would imagine so. However, I am the same as I ever was.”

Hermione looked puzzled, “That doesn’t make any sense, Harry.”

Harry shrugged, “It would if you knew what I knew.”

Ron asked, “What’s that?”

Harry shook his head, “Sorry, but that knowledge will wait for another day. Why don’t the three of you come by my room, and we can do our homework on wards together?”

Hermione and Ron exchanged puzzled glances. Neville immediately accepted, "I could use some help with this. I'm not sure I understood everything that Flitwick said about Anti-Apparation wards."

Harry replied as the two wizards began walking away, "It's simple, Neville. It's the same basic concept as the Disapparation Jinx. All you have to do is expand it to account for an area as opposed to a person." Harry continued to explain the premise behind the ward.

Ron looked at Hermione, "When did he get so smart?"

Hermione shrugged, "I have no idea, but I am going to find out." Then, she followed behind Harry and Neville, leaving Ron standing alone in the corridor.

Once it finally caught up in his brain that everyone had left him, Ron yelled, "Hey wait up." He ran after the other three Gryffindors.

Later that night at dinner, the four friends walked in laughing and joking together like they did before. The rest of the students in the Great Hall looked at them as if they had lost their minds. No one had seen the trio act this way in a long time. Unfortunately, Malfoy had to attempt to ruin the moment, "So, Potter, I see you have your little MudBlood friend and her Weasel of a boyfriend back in your pocket. Wait, I almost forgot about the brainless oaf."

Harry laughed, "Is that the best you can come up with, Malfoy?" Harry shook his head in disappointment, "You must be losing your touch. You're going to have to come up with better than that." As he said this, he caught sight of Crabbe and Goyle coming up to flank them. He quickly shifted his glance up to the Head table to see that none of the teachers were present yet. Harry grinned. He snapped the fingers of his left hand while muttering under his breath. Crabbe, Goyle and Malfoy all turned bright pink. Their clothes and everything. The other students in the hall burst out laughing. Harry said, "You know, Malfoy, that is quite a fetching color on you. You should wear it more often. It might put a bright side on your disposition."

Malfoy looked down to see that he was completely pink from head to toe. He growled, "You will pay for this, Potter."

Harry smiled broadly and took a bow, "I look forward to it, Malfoy. Until that day." Then, Harry spun around on his heel and walked towards the Gryffindor table. The other three Gryffindors smirked at Malfoy before turning and following Harry to the dinner table. Malfoy and his two cronies beat a hasty retreat from the room.

Once Hermione sat down, she looked sternly at Harry, "Harry, you can't do things like that. Malfoy could be dangerous."

Harry snorted, "That's a laugh, Hermione. Malfoy is a nuisance. Nothing more."

Ron laughed, "Yeah, Hermione, you're going to ruin the moment. We don't get the upper hand on Malfoy like that often."

Neville smiled knowingly, "I have a feeling that we will from now on though."

Harry smirked, "We'll see."

Hermione looked at the three boys, and then smiled, "Okay, you're all right. It was rather funny."

The four Gryffindors laughed merrily, but Harry's true attention was focused on only one place. Ginny Weasley. She had her eyes on him, and was gazing with rapt attention. He smiled to himself as he thought, "Maybe I have a chance. Maybe I can fix this." He pretended not to notice her staring to see how long it would go on. She didn't take her eyes from him until he started eating, and she finally bent her head to her own plate.

Harry returned to his room after dinner to sleep. The next day, Harry had a free morning that he spent down on the Quidditch pitch flying. It seemed like it had been forever since he had been on a broomstick. After lunch, he had Care of Magical Creatures with Ron and Neville. The three boys made their way down to Hagrid's hut. Hagrid greeted the other two boys warmly, "Hey, Ron, Neville." He said nothing to Harry, however.

Harry walked right up to him, and poked him in the stomach. Hagrid looked at Harry in surprise. Harry said, "Do I not get a greeting? I've known you longer than either of these two."

Hagrid continued to stare at Harry in shock and amazement. He finally managed, "Professor Dumbledore told me ye had changed, Arry, but I din't spect this much."

Harry laughed as he gave Hagrid a hug in front of the whole class. "I'm back, Hagrid. This time I'm not going anywhere, either."

Hagrid wiped a tear from his cheek as he returned Harry's hug. "I'm glad, Arry. I'm glad." Then, he turned to the rest of the class and began the lesson.

That afternoon, the Quidditch team assembled at the pitch. Ron looked at them, "Team, this is our last practice before the match with Slytherin. I want to mop the floor with them. We have our starting Seeker back, which puts Ginny scoring goals again. Now, let's get out there and work."

The team cheered and took to the air. Ron let the Snitch go and Harry caught in less than five minutes. The Chasers started running through their moves against Euan while Ron observed everyone. Dean and Seamus worked the new Beaters to death and got plenty of practice themselves. After about an hour, Ron called a halt to the practice. "That's enough for the day. I'm ready to eat, and the rest of you should have worked up an appetite by now."

Harry laughed, "Trust you to stop Quidditch practice for food."

Ron protested, "Hey, that's not funny."

The rest of the Quidditch team joined Harry in his laughter. They chorused, "Yes, it was."

Ron looked sheepish, and then grumbled, "I can't help it I'm a growing boy." Then, he landed his broom and headed for the changing rooms. The rest of the team followed.

Ginny stopped Harry just outside the doors, "What's different about you, Harry?"

Harry smiled down at her, "Nothing, my love. I just have a very different perspective than I did."

Ginny looked at Harry in confusion, "What did you just call me?"

Harry laughed, "My apologies. I called you my love."

Ginny narrowed her eyes, "When have I ever been your love?"

Harry reached out and touched her cheek lightly, "Always." Then, he turned and entered the changing rooms, leaving Ginny lost in her thoughts.

The remainder of the week passed quickly. Harry continued to spend time with Ron, Hermione, and Neville. He had no more encounters with Ginny, but he noticed her watching him from the corner of his eye on several occasions. Finally, the day of the match dawned. The Gryffindors were all up early to get ready for the match. Harry and Ron walked down to the pitch together to check the conditions. Then, the two of them walked back up to the Great Hall for breakfast.

After breakfast, everyone milled around talking until the team went down to the changing rooms to get ready for the game. After changing into their Quidditch robes, Ron stood up to give them the customary pep talk. "Alright, guys."

Natalie McDonald interrupted him, "And girls."

Ron nodded, "And girls. We're ready for this match. Its time to get out there and do some damage to the Slytherins. We have to show them that Gryffindor owns that Quidditch Cup and we mean to keep it."

Harry stomped his foot, "Hell, yeah."

The rest of the team looked at him in surprise. Ron grinned, "Let's do it."

The team cheered as they jumped up grabbing their broomsticks, and ran to the doors to await their names being called. The announcer began by calling out the names of the Slytherin team. Then he turned to the Gryffindors, "Welcome, your team, Gryffindor. We have your Chasers. Ginny Weasley! Natalie McDonald! Colin Creevey! Next we have your Beaters. Dean Thomas! Seamus Finnigan! Your Seeker. Harry Potter! And last we have your Captain and Keeper. Ronald Weasley!" The Gryffindors cheered as their team entered the pitch. Ron flew over and landed in the center.

Madam Hooch entered the center ring and said, "Captains, shake hands." Malfoy and Ron shook hands, both attempting to elicit some reaction from the other by squeezing extra hard. Neither gave in as Madam Hooch released the Snitch and Bludgers. Then, they released each other and took to the air. Madam Hooch threw the Quaffle into the air and blew her whistle. Ginny dove after the Quaffle immediately and headed straight for the other end of the pitch with Colin and Natalie on her heels. It was quickly apparent that the Slytherins had no prayer against the Gryffindor Chasers.

Malfoy was marking Harry closely, but Harry paid little attention to this. He was accustomed to having Malfoy licking at his boots. An hour into the match, Harry caught sight of the Snitch just as Ginny scored another goal and put Gryffindor up by 180-70. Harry quickly dove after the Snitch with Malfoy directly behind him. However, it was too little too late for Malfoy. Harry had a head start and a faster broomstick. It was over in seconds as Harry rose above the stands holding the Snitch. Madam Hooch blew her whistle, and Owen Cauldwell proclaimed, "Gryffindor wins. 330-70." No one paid any attention to the three Slytherins who were racing at Harry's unsuspecting figure from below. Crabbe, Goyle, and Malfoy all crashed into Harry and knocked him from his broomstick. Harry went flying through the air, and smiled as he knew he was about to shock quite a few people. He cast a Levitating Charm on himself and floated to the ground. The entire stadium stared at him in shock as he settled easily to the ground instead of smashing face first into the packed earth.

Harry pulled out his wand, but cast an Igniting Spell with his left hand on the three Slytherin's broomstick tails. They burst into flame, and the boys sped towards the ground in an attempt to put out the flames. Harry just smirked as he waved his wand, "Accio Firebolt." His faithful broomstick zoomed right into his hands as he pocketed his wand, and then turned to walk into the dressing room as though nothing had happened.

18. Christmas Time

The party after the Quidditch match was as boisterous as usual. Harry had went up to the Gryffindor common room with the others. The entire house was practically bouncing off the walls. Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnigan came over to Harry. Dean started the conversation, "Harry, that was bloody brilliant. You should have seen the looks on those three's faces when their broom tails caught on fire. It was classic."

Seamus nodded enthusiastically from Dean's side, "You better believe it. I doubt Malfoy is going to bothering any of us for a while after that humiliation."

Harry chuckled, "I don't think anything is going to stop Malfoy from being a prat. If anything, what I did today will just make him more determined to get one up on me. So, I would watch your backs. He could have his goons try anything."

Ron walked over as Harry said this, "Oh, don't worry, Harry. We can handle Malfoy. We're used to him by now. He won't try anything too drastic, not at the castle anyway."

Harry nodded, "True. He's not going to risk Dumbledore's ire. He will still try to pull something."

Hermione smiled as she walked up, "Malfoy is always trying to pull something. Things are just like they've always been."

Harry laughed and then took a swig of his butter beer before replying, "Right you are, Hermione. Right you are."

Neville flopped down into a chair on Harry's other side, "You just don't know how good it is to see you laughing again, Harry."

Harry grinned ruefully, "I don't suppose that I have done a whole lot of laughing over the past couple of years."

The other Gryffindors shook their heads. "I'm sorry I've been such a prat. I just hope we can put it all behind us."

Hermione leaned over and gave Harry a hug. He immediately wrapped his arms around her in return. She said, "Everything is already forgotten, Harry. Welcome back."

As Hermione broke the hug and stood up, Harry looked across the common room and found Ginny Weasley. He smiled sadly, "Not everything."

The others followed his gaze, and saw who he was looking at. Ron snickered, "Go talk to her. She won't bite."

Harry snorted, "Knowing the Weasley temper, she just might."

This earned him a laugh from the others as he got up and walked across the common room to Ginny's side. She was talking to Colin Creevey. Colin looked up at Harry in surprise. Ginny merely kept her gaze averted although it was obvious she knew he was standing there. Harry nodded to Colin, "What's up, Colin? Did you get any good pictures of the game?"

Colin smiled. Photography was his love. He nodded enthusiastically, "Of course. I snapped one of Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle with their broom tails on fire."

Harry eyes' widened and then he grinned, "Great. I want a copy of that one."

Colin chuckled, "I will have them developed in a few days. I'll make sure to make you a copy of that one."

Harry replied, "Thanks, Colin." Then, Harry motioned towards Ginny with his eyes, and then jerked his head the other way while looking at Colin.

Colin nodded. He took the hint immediately. He turned to Ginny, "Well, I'll leave you in good hands, Ginny. I'll talk to you later." Colin rose from the seat and beat a hasty retreat.

Harry took the chair that Colin had just vacated. He met Ginny's eyes and smiled, "Hi, Gin. You played great out there today. I was watching you."

A hint of a smile played at the corner of her lips, "You were watching me?"

Harry nodded, "Definitely. If I hadn't had to catch the Snitch, and keep Malfoy from killing me, I probably would have never taken my eyes off of you."

Apparently this was the wrong statement to make as Ginny stiffened, and then quickly jumped up and ran up the dormitory stairs. Harry sighed, and walked back over to Ron, Hermione, and Neville. He sighed again, "I give up. I just don't know what to say to her."

Hermione asked, "What did you say to her?"

Harry told them what he had said. Ron snorted, "No wonder she got upset, Harry. She knows about the Prophecy. She knows that you have to die. That comment about Malfoy trying to kill you just brought it all back."

Harry gaped in astonishment. Hermione picked up where Ron left off, "That was tactless of you, Harry. The Prophecy was the reason you told her that there could never be anything between the two of you. Then, you go and make a comment like that."

Harry slumped down into a chair, "It never occurred to me that she knew the Prophecy. I just assumed that I was mean to her or something."

Ron looked at Harry like he had lost his mind, "What do you mean? Don't you remember?"

Harry shook his head, "How could I? It didn't happen to me."

Neville asked, "What does that mean? You are Harry, aren't you?"

Harry shook his head again, "Not the one you know."

Hermione looked at him suspiciously, "Are you trying to say that there is more than one Harry?"

"Something like that. When I went back in time, the fabric of time was altered, but I didn't change with it. So, the Harry that all of you remember doesn't exist. I am what I would have become if events in the past hadn't been tampered with. That's why my attitude radically changed from what all of you remember. I don't have the same memories that all of you do."

Ron snorted, "You're out of your gourd, Harry. Especially if you expect me to believe all this."

Harry eyed Ron, "Would you believe me if I told you I could do wandless magic?"

Ron shook his head, "Of course not. That's a ridiculous question."

Harry chuckled, "What if I told you that I was an Animagus with more than one form?"

"That's ridiculous, too," said Ron.

Harry smiled, "That remains to be seen, Ron. If the three of you would follow me, then we will see if what I just said was really ridiculous." Harry rose from the seat he was in and walked out the portrait hole.

Neville jumped up to follow him and looked over at Ron and Hermione, "Are the two of you coming?"

Ron and Hermione exchanged glances. Ron shrugged, and the two of them got up to follow Neville, who was hurriedly attempting to catch up to Harry. The three of them followed Harry through the castle to the corridor with Barnabas the Barmy in it. Harry walked back and forth in front of the wall and a door appeared leading to the Room of Requirement. Harry stepped inside and the other three Gryffindors followed him in. When they stepped into the room they discovered several seats and a cleared space of floor. Harry turned to them and said, "Sit down." The other three sat and waited patiently for Harry to begin. Harry drew his wand from inside his robes, and tossed it to Ron, "There, now you know I don't have my wand."

Hermione leaned over and examined the wand Ron was holding, “Harry, that isn’t your wand.”

Harry smiled, “Very astute, Hermione. My wand was broken in a fight with Voldemort. I didn’t want everyone to know that I could do wandless magic, so I went to Diagon Alley and picked up a replacement. Now, what spell would you like to see me cast?”

Neville said immediately, “The Patronus Charm.”

Hermione spoke up, “You have to keep both of your hands in plain sight. We don’t want you hiding your other hand.”

Harry grinned, “Very well.” He raised both of his hands out in front of him and said clearly while picturing Ginny Weasley in his mind, “Expecto Patronum.” Three silver stags burst from the ends of Harry’s hands and circled the room once before retuning to stand beside Harry. Then, they faded from existence. Harry turned to look at the other students sitting in the room to find them sitting with their mouths hanging open in shock.

Ron stuttered, “You... you... just did wandless magic.”

Harry shrugged, “I told you.”

Neville asked, “What forms do you take as an Animagus?”

Harry transformed into a panther and walked up to put his head in Hermione’s lap. She started to scramble back in fear and surprise, but Ron caught her arm, “It’s just Harry. Pet him.” Ron leaned over and scratched the cat behind the ears. Hermione followed suit, while Harry purred. Then, he transformed into the chameleon. Ron looked closely to see Harry blending in with Hermione’s robes. “Wicked.”

Next, Harry turned into his phoenix form. Hermione exhaled loudly, “A magical Animagus. The only one ever recorded was Godric Gryffindor.”

Harry became himself again, “Since I am the Heir of Gryffindor, it makes sense that I would be the one to copy him.”

Hermione looked up at Harry, “You really aren’t the Harry that we remember, are you?”

Harry shook his head, “No, I’m not. Things changed when I went back in time. I antagonized Tom the other day, so its just a matter of time until he tries to go back again. Hopefully, I will be able to fix things when he does.”

Hermione asked, “What if you can’t?”

Harry shrugged, “I’ll figure something out. I hope.”

The four Gryffindors sat around in silence before three of them returned to the Gryffindor common room, while Harry slipped next door into his private room.

The rest of the term flew by and little happened to break the monotony of class and homework. Finally it was time for term to end and Christmas vacation to begin. Harry was in his room packing when Ron and Hermione came in. Ron looked over Harry’s belongings that he was haphazardly throwing into his trunk. He asked, “I didn’t think you ever went home for the holidays, Harry?”

Harry laughed, “I’m going to go to Grimmauld Place.”

Hermione asked, “What’s Grimmauld Place, Harry?”

Harry looked surprised, “Don’t tell me that we haven’t been using Sirius’ house as Headquarters for the Order.”

Ron and Hermione exchanged glances. Ron finally said, “Sirius is dead, Harry.”

Harry nodded, “I know. He’s dead in my timeline, too. If I can’t go to Grimmauld Place, then I guess I will just have to go to Potter Manor.”

Ron said, “I thought your family’s home was destroyed when you were a baby.”

Harry shook his head, "No, that was just the safe house that they were staying in. My family's ancestral home is just outside the village. Why don't all of you come to the Manor for Christmas? I would love to have my family together for another Christmas."

Hermione smiled, "I think that is a great idea, Harry." She turned to Ron, "Why don't you go and owl your mother and see if she would like that."

Harry waved a hand, "Don't bother. I will pop over and ask her. I'll be back in a sec." Harry Disappeared away.

Ron turned to look at Hermione, "I thought you said that it was impossible to Disapparate inside Hogwart's grounds?"

Hermione nodded, "It is."

Ron pointed to where Harry had just stood, "Then, what the hell did he just do?"

Hermione shrugged, "I think that he Disapparated."

Ron snorted, "How did he do it if its impossible?"

Hermione shrugged again, "I guess you will just have to ask him. I'm clueless."

Harry appeared in the kitchen of the Burrow, where he had sensed Mrs. Weasley's magical signature. She gasped in surprise when Harry appeared beside her. "What are you doing here, Harry?"

Harry smiled, "I came to ask you if all of you would like to come to Potter Manor for Christmas. I would really like to spend Christmas with my family."

Molly Weasley smiled at the young man before her, "I can't speak for the rest of the family, Harry, but I would be honored to spend Christmas in your home. Now, to a more important question, how did you get here?"

"I Apparated."

Molly asked, "From Hogwarts?"

Harry nodded, "Of course. Why?"

Molly replied, "There are Anti-Apparation wards around Hogwarts and the Burrow."

Harry grinned sheepishly, "Oh, yeah. I guess I failed to mention that I could Apparate around the wards without damaging them."

Molly laughed as Arthur walked into the kitchen, "I suppose so."

Arthur looked at the two people standing in the kitchen and asked, "Whatever is so funny, dear?"

Molly continued to chuckle, "Harry is. By the way, Arthur, we have been invited to spend Christmas at Potter Manor."

Arthur smiled, "I presume you have accepted."

Molly shook her head, "Not yet."

Arthur turned to Harry and said, "Then, I will accept the invitation for us, Harry. We would be honored to spend Christmas at your home."

Harry clasped his hands together, "I better go over to the Manor and get things ready then. I don't know what kind of condition the house is in. I'll see all of you tomorrow." Harry Disappeared back to Hogwart's kitchens to see Dobby.

After Harry had disappeared, Arthur looked at Molly in surprise, "Did he just Apparate?"

Molly nodded, "Yes, he did."

"Are the wards down?"

Molly shook her head, “No, that’s what I was laughing at a moment ago. He informed me that he can Apparate around the wards.”

Arthur looked incredulous, “You’re kidding.”

“I am afraid not.”

Arthur chuckled, “With him around, I don’t feel so bad about this war. I think that we just might win.”

Molly smiled, “Yes, he certainly is different from what he was. I hope he manages to fix everything when he goes to the past again.”

Arthur nodded, “So do I. So do I.”

Harry popped into the kitchens at Hogwarts right next to Dobby. Dobby spun in surprise and squealed, “Harry Potter, sir. It is Harry Potter.”

Harry grinned, “Hey, Dobby, I was wondering if you would do me a favor?”

“Anything, Harry Potter, sir. Anything.” replied Dobby excitedly.

Harry said, “Good. I need some help cleaning up Potter Manor. I don’t know how dirty it is going to be, and the Weasleys are coming over for Christmas.”

Dobby nodded his head vigorously, “Dobby is glad to clean up for Harry Potter. Dobby is going right now.”

Harry placed a hand on Dobby’s shoulder, “Hold on. I’m coming with you. I’m not going to let you do it all by yourself.” Then, Harry Apparated away, and Dobby followed him to Potter Manor. When the two arrived, they discovered that the house was covered in cobwebs and dust. Harry looked around, “This might take longer than I thought, Dobby. You start down here, and I’ll start at the top. We’ll meet in the middle as soon as we can get done.” Harry patted Dobby on the shoulder, “I’ll see you in a bit.” Harry headed up the stairs, and heard just as he was getting out of earshot Dobby muttering under his breath to himself, “Harry Potter is the greatest wizard that has ever lived.” Harry shook his head and smiled ruefully to himself. Then, he set to work cleaning up the house. About an hour later, Harry met Dobby in the middle of the third floor. Dobby smiled, “Dobby is proud to say that his half of the house is clean, Harry Potter, sir.”

Harry grinned, “I’ve got my half done, too. Thanks, Dobby. Now, all I have to do is stock the kitchen with some food tomorrow, and we’ll be set for the holidays.”

Dobby nodded, “Dobby was glad to help Harry Potter, sir.”

Harry smiled, “I appreciate it all the same. I’ll see you back at Hogwarts, Dobby.” The wizard and house-elf both disappeared at the same time. One headed for the kitchen of Hogwarts and the other headed for his room. When Harry popped back into existence in his room at Hogwarts, he found Ron and Hermione waiting on him. He looked at the two of them, “The two of you do know that we are leaving for Christmas break tomorrow? Don’t you think you need to pack?”

Hermione snorted, “I had everything packed this morning, and Ron always waits till the last minute. I felt that it was more important to wait for you to come back.”

“Why?”

Ron answered before Hermione could open her mouth again, “It might have had something to do with the fact that you just Disapparated in Hogwarts when Hermione has been harping at me that it can’t be done for years.”

Harry smiled, “Can’t is an awfully strong word. Unlikely would be a more appropriate term.”

Ron asked, “What does that mean?”

Harry replied, "It means that the wards surrounding Hogwarts don't prevent people from Apparating, they just make it increasingly difficult to do it. The more power you pour into the attempt, the harder the wards fight you. This makes it virtually impossible to do it, because very few witches and wizards in history have had the power to overcome the wards."

Hermione's eyes widened in surprise, "You have the power to overcome the wards, though."

Harry nodded, "I do, but I don't have to."

"Why not?" asked Hermione.

Harry explained, "When you have enough power to overcome the wards, then you also start learning how they truly function. Once you truly understand how the wards function, you can begin manipulating them not to fight your particular magical signature. Every time that I Apparate through Anti-Apparation wards, it gets a little easier. I'm at a point now that I don't even really notice them anymore. I just shunt their power sideways and slip through. It is almost a reflex."

Ron waved a hand, "Okay, enough technical explanations. Did you talk to my parents?"

Harry nodded, "Yep, they said that they would love to come. So, that means you get to come home with me tomorrow."

Hermione smiled, "Since I was going to spend the holidays with them, I suppose that means that I can come to."

Harry grinned broadly, "The more the merrier."

Ron stood up, "Alright, then. Its starting to get late, and I still have to pack. I'm heading for my dorm." Ron walked out the door.

Hermione jumped up quickly, "I think that I better go help him."

Harry smirked knowingly at Hermione as she flushed slightly. She beat a hasty retreat from the room, and left Harry to himself. Harry sighed and laid down on his bed to rest, before drifting off to sleep.

The next morning the castle was a bustle of activity as most of the students scrambled to get their things together to depart on the train. Ron and Hermione were standing with Harry watching the commotion when Ginny walked up to them. She said, "Well, Ron, are you ready to head down to the station and get on the train?"

Ron shook his head in reply, "We're not getting on the train, Ginny. We're going to Potter Manor."

Ginny looked over at Harry, who was smiling at her very warmly. Then, she jerked her head back to stare Ron in the eyes, "What are you talking about?"

Ron smiled down at his baby sister, "Harry invited the whole family over to his house for the Christmas holidays. Mum and Dad accepted, so that is where we are going."

Ginny asked darkly, "Why didn't anyone tell me about it?"

Harry spoke up, "Sorry, Ginny. This all just sort of snowballed together late last night. None of us thought to come and find you to let you know. I hope you don't mind coming to stay at my house."

Ginny eyed Harry warily then said, "I guess not. I was just surprised, that's all. So, how are we going to get there?"

Harry said, "I'm going to Apparate us all over there in just a bit. I'm waiting on the rest of your family to arrive. I spoke to the Headmaster about arranging for the Floo Network to be reconnected to the house, but he said that he couldn't promise that it would be operational until tomorrow. So, the only way for us to get there is to Apparate, and none of the rest of you can get through the wards. I have to wait for everyone to get here."

Ginny raised her eyebrows and opened her mouth as if she was going to ask another question, but Hermione caught her eye and very imperceptibly shook her head. So, Ginny remained quiet until the twins came walking into the room.

Fred grinned, "What's up, Harry?"

George held up a packed bag, "We've closed the shop for the holidays, and we're ready to just sit around the house and vegetate."

Harry laughed, "Sounds like a plan to me."

Fred, George, Ron, and Hermione joined Harry in his laughter. Ginny stood there and looked at all of them as if they were crazy. Fred caught the look on her face and asked, "What's the matter with you, Ginny?"

Ginny pointed at them, "What is the matter with all of you? Harry has been withdrawing from all of us since he found out about the Prophecy, and now the five of you are standing around joking like none of it ever happened."

Harry sighed, "Can you give us a second, guys?"

Fred and George nodded, "We'll get rid of the peanut gallery, Harry." The twins proceeded to push Ron and Hermione away amidst protests from the two younger Gryffindors.

Harry smiled down at Ginny while she continued to eye him with a reserved expression. "Ginny, the Prophecy that you know isn't the one that I know."

Ginny's eyes narrowed, "What are you talking about?"

Harry sighed, "This is difficult to explain without showing you the difference between the two Prophecies. Can you wait to find out until we get to Potter Manor? I promise that as soon as we get settled, the two of us will sit down alone, and I will explain everything, my love."

Ginny protested, "That is the second time that you have called me, 'your love.' What is going on?"

Harry raised his hands, "I promise I will tell you everything when we get to the Manor. Just be patient till then."

Ginny blew up her bangs in frustration, "Oh, alright. I want to know everything, though."

Harry smiled and reached out to touch her cheek. He brushed his fingers lightly across her cheek, and then leaned over and pecked Ginny on the other cheek. Then, Harry turned and raced after the twins, Ron, and Hermione. Ginny stood there stunned for just a moment before reaching up to touch her cheek where Harry had just kissed her. She stood that way and smiled, lost in her thoughts until she was interrupted by Bill. He walked up to her and asked, "Where is everybody else?"

Ginny shrugged, "I don't know. I guess they will be back in a bit, though. The way I understood it, we were all supposed to meet here."

Bill nodded, "That's what I was told. So, what was up with you? You were staring off into space just a moment ago."

Ginny smiled again, "Harry kissed me on the cheek. I was surprised to say the least."

Bill chuckled, "I take it that means the boy is finally coming to his senses."

Ginny looked over at him, "What is that supposed to mean?"

Bill continued to grin, "It means, he must have realized how wonderful my baby sister is. Not to mention, he must have noticed how much you love him."

Ginny sighed, "He's going to die, though. That makes me so scared."

Bill laid a hand on her shoulder and said, "I wouldn't worry too much about that. I don't think that you're going to have to worry about him dying. I think that he's got a trick or two up his sleeve."

"What does that mean?"

"I'll let him tell you."

"Let him tell you what?" asked Arthur as he, Molly, and Charlie walked up to the two of them.

Bill looked at his parents, “Nothing, I was just giving Ginny a big-brother talk.”

About that time, Harry came back dragging the twins along the ground by the collars of their robes. By all appearances they were both bound by Full Body Binds. Ron and Hermione were following behind them laughing. Charlie asked, “What’s going on?”

Ron continued to laugh, but Hermione stopped long enough to point at the twins and say, “Those two decided that it would be a good idea to try and play a practical joke on Harry. He didn’t seem to think that it was as good an idea as they did. This is the result.” Then, she began chuckling again. The rest of the Weasleys looked at the twins once more and then looked at each other. Then, they all burst into laughter.

Harry deposited the twins at their mother’s feet. Then, he waved a hand at them, “Finite Incantato.”

The twins jumped to their feet. George smiled, “That was bloody brilliant, Harry. I don’t think that I have ever seen anyone move that fast.”

Fred nodded in agreement, “I know I haven’t. If I hadn’t known better I would have thought that you were on your Firebolt.”

Ginny asked, “What exactly did you try to do to him?”

Fred laughed, “We were going to drop a bucket of paint on him, so we charmed it to float above the doorway. He must have sensed that something was up, because as soon as he stepped through the door...”

George took over as Fred paused for breath, “He dove sideways out of the way as the paint fell. Then, he cursed the two of us so quickly that we didn’t even see the curses coming. It was amazing.”

Harry smirked, “The two of you should have known better than to try to pull a joke on me. I’ve been around for entirely too many of your tricks to be fooled that easily.”

Arthur laughed, “I have been waiting for someone to get the jump on those two jokers for most of their lives. All I can say is that its about time.”

Molly hid a smile behind her hand, “Don’t you think that we should get going, Harry?”

Harry nodded, “Yes, I suppose we should. It’s going to be hard for everyone to grab a hold of me for us to take the trip together, so I guess that I should make a Portkey.” He reached into his trunk and pulled out a robe. He tapped it with his finger and said, “Portus.” Then, he handed it to Arthur, “Everyone, grab hold of the robe. When they have, Arthur, just tap the collar with your wand. It will deposit all of you in the den of Potter Manor. I will be just behind.”

The rest of the Weasley clan put a hand on the robe. Arthur looked around at his family, “Everyone ready?” he asked. They all nodded. So, Arthur tapped his wand to the collar of the robe and they all disappeared and then reappeared in Potter Manor. Harry appeared with a pop just behind them.

Harry grinned as the Weasleys looked around at the immaculate house they found themselves in. “Well, make yourselves at home. There are a string of rooms on the second floor. All of you take your pick.”

Ron asked, “What about you, Harry?”

Harry laughed, “My room is on the third floor. So, you don’t have to worry about that. I’m going to drop my stuff off in my room, then I have to go down to the village grocery and get some food for this place.”

Molly Weasley shook her head, “I’ll handle the groceries, Harry. You should enjoy the holidays.”

Harry sighed, “Alright. Here, this should cover anything that we need.” Harry handed Molly a several fifty pound notes.

Molly protested, “Harry, you don’t have to give me any money. I can take care of it.”

Harry replied, “Nonsense. All of you are my guests. The least I can do is put food in the house.”

Molly smiled as she took the money, "Alright, I'll be back from the market shortly." She departed.

Harry looked over at the rest of the Weasleys and said, "Well, what are you waiting for? Go pick your rooms." Arthur and the group of boys enthusiastically ran up the stairs to find rooms. Ginny and Hermione followed somewhat more reservedly, but both of them had grins plastered across their faces.

Harry went up to his room, and began unpacking only to be interrupted a few minutes later by a loud fake cough from his doorway. He looked up to see Ginny Weasley standing in the doorway. She said determinedly, "I believe that you have promised me an explanation."

Harry nodded, "Yes, I did." He motioned towards a chair by the bed, "Sit down, and we'll get started."

Ginny took a seat and smiled at Harry, "I'm waiting."

Harry shook his head in amusement, then waved his hand at his desk, "Accio Pensieve." Harry's Pensieve leaped from the desk across the room into his hands. He began speaking, "I have stored in here my memory of the Prophecy and Dumbledore's memory of the Prophecy. You will see upon hearing them that they are very different. We'll go with the one you know first." Harry tapped the Pensieve with his finger and an image of Sybill Trelawney floated up out of the silvery substance that seemed to be constantly swirling around the bowl.

THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES...BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRICE DEFIED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES... AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWS NOT, AND NEITHER OF THEM CAN SURVIVE AND LET THE WORLD LIVE...THE TWO MUST DIE FOR THE WORLD TO SURVIVE... THEY WILL DESTROY ONE ANOTHER OR THE DARK LORD WILL DESTROY THE WORLD... THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD WILL BE BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES...

Harry continued speaking, "This is the Prophecy from this timeline. This is the Prophecy that you know. This is the Prophecy that I am currently bound by. This is the Prophecy that forced me to withdraw from everyone that I truly care about. This is the Prophecy that I am going to alter."

Ginny asked, "What do you mean by that? How could you alter it?"

Harry replied, "It has already been altered once. I just intend to fix it. This is the Prophecy that I know." He tapped his finger to the Pensieve again, and another image of Sybill Trelawney appeared. This one with a very different message.

THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES ... BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRICE DEFIED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES ... AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWS NOT ... AND EITHER MUST DIE AT THE HAND OF THE OTHER FOR NEITHER CAN LIVE WHILE THE OTHER SURVIVES ... THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD WILL BE BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES...

Harry smiled, "As you can see, that is a very different Prophecy than the one that you know. That is what the Prophecy was until Voldemort went back in time and forced me to follow him. Something we did changed it. He'll go back again, since he doesn't like this Prophecy anymore than the last one. I will follow and then I will be able to fix everything. Then, everything will be alright. I can come home to my family."

Ginny turned somber and said, "What if you can't fix things? What if the only way for you to defeat Voldemort is for you to die yourself? I can't live with that. I love you, Harry, and I will never forget you, but I can't let myself get anymore attached to you than I already am. I'm sorry." Ginny got up from her seat and ran out of the room in tears.

Harry sighed to himself, "I'm going to fix everything, Ginny. I promise."

Ron and Hermione walked into the room. Ron said, "She'll come around, Harry. Don't worry."

Harry shook his head, "No, she won't. She won't have to, though. Once I fix things, she won't even remember that any of this happened. It will be like none of this happened."

Hermione sighed, "Are you saying that we won't remember any of this?"

Harry shook his head, "No, I will be the only person to remember any of it. I will be the only one of us outside the sequence of time."

Ron looked puzzled, "So, time is just going to change around us?"

Harry nodded, "Basically. Well, I have to finish unpacking, because I need to run into Diagon Alley."

Ron asked, "What are you going to go to Diagon Alley for?"

Harry grinned mischievously, "Christmas shopping."

Hermione smiled, "Ooh, I want to go."

Harry shook his head, "Not a chance. I'm going by myself. No one is going to know what anybody else's Christmas present is. I'm going to surprise everyone this year."

Ron grinned, "You mean we get presents from you."

Harry nodded, "Of course. Now, shoo." Harry waved his hands at the two of them, "I have to finish this and I will never get done if the two of you are in here."

Ron grumbled good naturedly, "Alright, we'll go. Come on, Hermione, let's leave loverboy here to his plots."

Hermione giggled, "Okay, we'll go. Bye, Harry, we'll see you when you get back."

Harry smiled, "Alright. Hey, Ron. Wizard's Chess?"

Ron nodded, "Definitely."

Ron and Hermione left the room. Harry finished unpacking quickly, and then Apparated to Diagon Alley. He conducted his shopping, and then returned to the Manor. A wave of his hand later, the packages were wrapped and sitting under the tree that he had bought while shopping in Diagon Alley. Harry walked down to the sitting room to look at the tree. Then, he walked over and opened the closet in which he had discovered the Christmas ornaments while exploring the house in the other timeline. He assumed, correctly that they would be in the same place. Harry waved his hand, "Wingardium Leviosa." The gigantic box of ornaments floated out and landed by the tree. Harry then yelled, "It's time to trim the tree. So, get in here."

Hermione and all the Weasleys minus Ginny ran into the sitting room. Bill asked, "What's going on?"

Harry said, "We're going to trim the tree."

Hermione smiled, "Great, let's get started."

Charlie looked around, "Where's Ginny?"

Ron shook his head, "I don't think that she is going to want to help. We should just leave her alone."

Charlie's eyes narrowed with suspicion, "What's wrong with her?"

Molly sighed, "I think that I know. I'll go talk to her. I'll be back in a bit. Go ahead and get started on the tree."

Arthur grinned at his children, Harry, and Hermione, "You heard her. Let's get busy."

The entire bunch dug into the box and began laying out the ornaments to get organized. They spent the rest of the afternoon fixing up the tree. The group of wizards and witches spent several hours during the next few days fixing ornaments and things up around the Manor as well. Ginny finally joined them once she saw how much fun they were having, although she did maintain her distance from Harry. He respected this and did not approach her.

Finally, it was the day of Christmas. Everyone exchanged presents. Harry appeared to be delighted just to watch the rest of his family open the presents that he had gotten them. The twins received matching dragonhide gloves. Harry laughed, "With all the experiments that the two of you perform, I figured that you could use them."

The twins grinned and chorused, "Right you are, Harry."

Arthur received a Swiss Army Knife. Harry spent several minutes explaining how to use all of the attachments that were on the knife. Molly opened up a set of new robes. Ron got his own set of Quidditch gear. Hermione received several books on Experimental Charms. Charlie got dragonhide boots, while Bill was sporting a new dragonhide jacket. Ginny was the last one to open her present from Harry. Harry held his breath. He had wisely chosen not to get her anything romantic, but he wasn't sure how well she would accept getting a present from him at all. She opened up the gift to see a certificate. She looked up at Harry as she picked up the sheet of parchment, "What is this for?"

Harry smiled, "I bought you a pet phoenix. That certificate will allow you to pick her up at the Magical Menagerie. I would have already brought her here, but it would have been impossible to hide her."

Ginny smiled and tears began to form at the corners of her eyes, "Thank you, Harry. I love the present."

Harry smiled and nodded, "I'm glad."

19. 2nd Time Interlude

The rest of the Christmas holidays passed by quickly amidst all the games and pranks that the Weasleys, Harry, and Hermione played. The night before the group of students would have to return to Hogwarts, Harry was struck by a vision through his scar. Voldemort was casting the time travel spell. Harry smiled to himself. It was time to have a little fun. He ran over to Ginny and pulled her into his arms. Then, he bent quickly and planted a feather soft kiss on her lips. "By the time I return, you will not even remember that any of this has happened, Ginny. I still want you to know that I love you very much. Now, I have to go work."

Ginny called after him as he stepped away from her, "Be careful, Harry."

Harry grinned, "Don't worry. I know what I'm doing. Bye."

Then, Harry Apparated to where Voldemort was casting the time travel spell. When Harry appeared the surrounding Death Eaters sprang into action, and a major battle ensued. Killing Curses and Cruciatus Curses filled the air as the Death Eaters attempted to keep Harry from reaching Voldemort. Harry ignored the spells, and repeatedly threw Explosion Hexes into the throng of black robed wizards. Finally, Harry came to just outside the circle where Voldemort was casting the spell. Lucius Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange blocked his path. Harry chuckled, "Come now, the two of you don't really think that you can stop me, do you?"

Bellatrix replied scathingly, "We don't have to stop you, Potter. All we have to do is give the Master time to journey back. There he will destroy you and none of this will have ever occurred."

Harry laughed, "Well, you are right about this never having occurred because I am going to return things to the normal flow of time. However, you are wrong about your precious Master destroying me. Little to your knowledge or his, Tom is playing right into my hands."

Lucius asked sharply as he raised his wand, "What are you talking about, Potter?"

Harry replied, "I want him to go back in time. As a matter of fact, I goaded him into doing it. Now, I can go back to where the Prophecy does not bind us, and I can kill him without dying. Then, I can restore whatever it was that he altered, return to the present and live happily ever after. Before I do that, though, there is the little matter of killing the two of you." Harry waved his hand to conjure a sword. Then, in a stab so fast that Bellatrix didn't even see him move, Harry plunged the sword into Lucius' chest. Lucius gurgled once as he slid lifeless off the end of the blade. Harry smiled evilly at Bellatrix, "Interesting way to die, don't you think, Bella. I'm sure that you will enjoy joining Lucius in his fate." Harry reversed the sword and plunged his sword into Bellatrix's chest. Then, Harry turned to Voldemort. The two of them locked eyes for one moment in which Voldemort communicated all the hatred in his being to Harry. Harry merely bowed and smiled. Then, Voldemort was gone, fleeing into the ethers of the past. Harry chuckled to himself, "Let the battle begin." Then, in a flash of light, Harry left the scene with a pile of Death Eaters, both dead and stunned strewn around.

When Harry popped into existence in the past, it was no great surprise to find himself in Godric's Hollow, standing just outside a home bright with light streaming out the window. Harry could see inside, and there were Halloween decorations hung all around the sitting room. Inside, a young couple were sitting in the floor playing with a little child that had to be about a year old. Harry smiled from the window down at his parents and himself. Then, he heard a voice behind him, "Potter."

Harry turned around to see the Voldemort from the future standing in the darkened street just behind him. Harry sighed, "I expected you to come here. My question is did you come here to stop yourself from attacking, or did you come here to die killing me?"

Voldemort laughed maniacally, "Neither. I came to watch. Then, after it is all over, I will kill you. A single Avada Kedavra Curse to unlock your power and fulfill the Prophecy. Then, I will simply slice the child's throat and watch you bleed to death."

Harry shook his head, "You know that I will never allow that, Tom."

Voldemort drew his wand, "We shall see. It is time for this to come to an end."

Harry flung his cloak away to free up the movement of his arms, "I suppose it is, Tom. I can't say that I have enjoyed life as your enemy, but it certainly has made things interesting. However, now it is time for you to say goodbye to life, if that is what you can call it." Harry raised his hands and cried out loudly, "Rulers of Magical Essence, I beseech you, Draw us into another realm where this battle may be settled once and for all. Creatus Batale Realmus." Wind began to stir around the two wizards, while it remained calm everywhere else. It was as if the two of them were caught up in miniature tornadoes. As the intensity of the wind grew, Voldemort began looking around him in trepidation, while Harry merely grinned. Then, without warning both of them were sucked up into the air, and they disappeared from the past forever.

The two of them were deposited in a realm that was devoid of any other inhabitants. Voldemort sneered, "Where have you taken us, Potter?"

Harry stretched his arms over his head, and casually popped his neck before answering, "This is kind of like Limbo. The two of us are stuck here until one of us defeats the other in combat. The victor may leave the realm, and the loser will die. It is that simple."

Voldemort assumed a dueling stance, and said, "Let us begin, Potter."

Harry replied easily, "Very well."

Voldemort began the duel by casting an Explosion Hex. Harry allowed the hex to hit him calmly and asked, "Do you still expect that to work? You know you can't harm me with spells that weak."

Voldemort replied angrily, "Then, try this on for size. Engorgis Crucia Prolongis."

Harry quickly dove sideways, "I'm impressed, Tom. I would never have expected you to find out about that spell. I'm even more impressed that you can actually cast it. This seems like it will be a much more interesting fight than I had at first thought."

Voldemort smiled cruelly, "Yes, I had my Death Eaters poring over ancient texts to find anything that might be able to harm you."

Harry snorted, "Pitiful. You can't even do your research. No wonder I am destined to win this battle. You are afraid of a little work."

Voldemort's eyes flared in anger, "How dare you, Potter? It is time for you to die. Avada Kedavra Eternalis."

Harry rolled sideways and conjured two daggers while he was rolling away from the curse. As he came out of the roll, he flung the daggers at Voldemort with pinpoint accuracy. However, Voldemort was ready, and merely waved his wand to erect a shield to block the daggers. By the time that the daggers had fallen to the ground, and the shield had faded away, Harry was standing with a sword in his hand. He smiled, "I'm even more impressed, Tom. Not only did you manage to discover these spells, but you also managed to keep the fact hidden from me. I think that I might have to change my opinion of you."

Voldemort conjured his own sword into his off hand, "Now, we will duel as two masters meeting would. Guard yourself, Potter. I will be your end."

Harry snorted as he assumed a dueling position, "How many times are you going to tell me that? Quite frankly, its beginning to get a little old."

Voldemort didn't answer verbally, he merely charged at Harry. Harry met the charge head on, and crossed swords with the most powerful Dark Lord to date. Then, the duel between the two began in earnest. The sword blows rained back and forth between the two of them so fast that if there had been an audience, few people would have been able to keep up with the action. It was still obvious that Harry was the superior swordsman, but it wasn't by much. However, he finally disarmed Voldemort, but this gave Voldemort an opening to cast a spell. "Engorgis Crucia Prolongis." The curse caught Harry just under his sword arm, and he fell to the ground writhing in pain. Voldemort laughed maniacally as he held Harry under the curse. He released the curse to fire another, "Avada Kedavra Eternalis."

It was too little too late, though. The second that Harry was released from the curse, he rolled to his feet and hurled two Explosion Hexes at Voldemort. They caught him square in the chest and sent him wind milling through the air to land several yards away. He staggered brokenly back to his feet, as Harry stood panting with the effort of overcoming the pain of the curse. The two most powerful wizards in existence stood there staring at each other with a newfound respect apparent in each of them. However, this was overwhelmed by the deep abiding hatred that the two shared for one another. Harry said while taking deep breaths, "You didn't think it was going to be that easy did you? I'm not that easy to kill."

Voldemort said angrily, "Perhaps not, Potter, but I will finish you in the end."

Harry stood up straighter, "We'll see, Tom. We'll see."

Voldemort waved his wand and sent a flurry of Stunning Spells soaring at Harry. Harry merely flicked his hand, "Protego." The Shield Spell deflected all of the curses easily. Harry smiled, "You are wounded a great deal worse than I am, Tom. This battle will go to me."

Voldemort snarled, "The battle isn't over yet, Potter."

Harry said, "Then, perhaps I should end it." Harry then threw out his left hand shouting, "Stupefy." Four Stunning Spells emitted from his finger and zoomed straight at Voldemort. Voldemort blocked the curses easily, but was completely unprepared for Harry to appear behind him and plunge his sword deep into Voldemort's back. Voldemort fell back gagging on his own blood. Harry said calmly, "It is over, Tom. Avada Kedavra Eternalis." The massive jet of green light that erupted from Harry's hand caught Voldemort in the face and knocked him into a flip, where he landed lifeless on the ground. Harry slumped to the ground, exhausted. He sighed, "It's over."

As quickly as the words left his mouth, a rumbling sound began to be heard and the ground began to shake. Harry looked around and said out loud to himself, "What the hell is going on here?"

The entire realm began to disintegrate around him, and a voice cried out loudly, "YOU HAVE DISTURBED TIME ONCE TOO MANY, HARRY POTTER. YOU AND THIS OTHER PATHETIC WRETCH OF A WIZARD WILL FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF MEDDLING WITH TIME."

Voldemort got up from where he had been lying dead a moment before and said, "What the hell is going on, Potter?"

Harry said with trepidation and truth be told a little fear apparent in his voice, "The Spirit of Time has been awakened, and to say the least, he's pissed."

20. The Spirit of Time

As the realm continued to break down, Voldemort and Harry were transported to another realm. This one was bleak and desolate. Voldemort looked over at Harry and asked, "Where are we, Potter?"

Harry said, "I'm not for sure, yet, but if we are where I suspect we are, then we're dead."

Voldemort looked at Harry suspiciously, "What are you talking about, Potter? We're not dead."

Harry shook his head, "Not yet, but unless we work together we will be."

As the two of them stood staring off into the nothingness that surrounded them, a spirit began to materialize before them. Harry swore loudly, "Damn. This is bad."

The spirit finished materializing, and began to speak, "The two of you have shown a blatant disregard for the sanctity of time. Now, you must pay the price."

Voldemort snarled, "Who do you think you are, spirit? I am Lord Voldemort, and I do not take lectures from pathetic entities like yourself."

Harry reached over and slapped Voldemort in the side of the head. "Are you crazy? This is the Spirit of Time, Tom. He's the manifestation of one of the controlling influences of magic. We're in his world, and we have to play by his rules."

Voldemort froze as the impact of what Harry had said hit him. "We're in one of the Spirit realms?"

Harry nodded, "Of course. You interfered with time, and so did I when I tried to stop you. You knew there would be consequences to going back."

The Spirit of Time interrupted them, "While I am particularly enjoying the argument that the two of you are having, I have other things to do with my time. Since the two of you are stuck here forever, then I will have plenty of time to observe you later." Then, the Spirit of Time disappeared from their sight.

Voldemort turned to Harry and said, "It seems that the two of us have no choice but to call a truce."

Harry replied while gritting his teeth, "I am well aware of that fact, Tom. Since the two of us came in together, then the only way for us to leave is together."

Voldemort nodded, "We might as well begin by you educating me about Spirit Realms. I know that you have combed my mind for all my knowledge, and I have no clue how to leave here. So, if you know how to get out, then tell me."

Harry sighed, "The only way for us to get out of this realm is to track down the Spirit of Time and convince him to give us the opportunity to fight our way out. Hopefully, the idea of watching us in combat will amuse him, and he will give us the chance. If he refuses, we could team together and destroy him to get out, but that would break down the entire sequence of time, and we would never get back to where we wanted to go."

Voldemort waved his wand and conjured a carriage for himself. He climbed onto it and waved his wand again, and it began to move. He looked back over his shoulder and said, "Coming, Potter?"

Harry sighed once again, "Do I have a choice?" Harry waved his hand and conjured another carriage. He jumped aboard and it began to follow Voldemort's carriage. The two of them journeyed for what seemed like days before finally encountering the Spirit of Time. Harry leaned towards Voldemort and whispered quickly, "Whatever you might be thinking, keep your mouth shut. The Spirit of Time knows that you are the one that started this mess in the first place. Let me do the talking."

Voldemort's eyes flashed with fury at being spoken to thus, but seeing how he knew Harry to be right, he said nothing. Then, Voldemort nodded curtly to signal that he would comply with Harry's terms.

Harry turned back towards the Spirit of Time as they approached and said, "Spirit of Time, we have come before you to beg for a chance to redeem ourselves."

The Spirit leaned back in the air into a reclining position and said, "Well, proceed. I am anxious to hear what idea you might have."

Harry took a deep breath before beginning to speak, "We think that we should be tested in combat by you. If we can succeed in the tasks that you put before us, we should be given our freedom. In essence, Spirit of Time, we are challenging your wits with our power."

The Spirit of Time laughed uproariously, "My, you certainly are a bold one. I will accept your terms. However, I will need time to prepare the challenges that the two of you will face. Also, both of you must succeed in defeating the challenges or neither of you will go free."

Harry nodded, "We accept your terms, Spirit of Time."

The Spirit of Time nodded, "Remain here until I return. Then, I will present you with the first challenge." The Spirit of Time vanished from the sight of the two wizards once again.

Harry leaped from his carriage, and vanished it with a wave of his hand. Then, Harry sat down on the ground with his legs crossed. He closed his eyes and drifted into a meditative state.

Voldemort interrupted his thoughts by asking, "What are you doing, Potter?"

Harry replied easily, "I am meditating."

"Why?"

"What else do I have to do until the Spirit of Time returns? I might as well prepare myself for the battle ahead." answered Harry.

Voldemort conjured a plush seat for himself and sat down. He leaned back and settled himself for the wait ahead.

The two wizards sat, each lost in their own thoughts awaiting what was to come. In Harry's case, this meant his thoughts were focused upon memories of a certain fiery young red head that had captured his heart. In Voldemort's case, this meant that his thoughts were focused on how he was going to manage to kill Potter once the two of them had concluded this despicable truce. Power was the only thing that mattered, and Voldemort was determined that his power was to be absolute. Harry was just as determined to stop this, but he knew that focusing his entire life around stopping Voldemort would not allow him to truly enjoy life, so he kept his thoughts centered on more pleasant matters.

Finally, the Spirit of Time returned. He clasped his ethereal hands together with glee and said, "I have prepared the challenges that will await you. Now, we must go."

Harry and Voldemort followed the Spirit of Time until they reached two Firebolt broomsticks. Harry's eyes lit up in anticipation at the same moment Voldemort's eyes darkened with fury. Harry asked brightly, "So, what do we have to do?"

The Spirit of Time said, "I have prepared three challenges for you. If you complete the first, then I will tell you what the second is. The first challenge is a series of riddles. Between the two of you, you only have one chance to answer the riddle. If the answer you give is wrong, then you have failed, and you will remain here forever. Shall we begin?"

Harry looked over at Voldemort, who nodded for Harry to continue, but muttered under his breath, "This is ridiculous. I am the Dark Lord. I do not have time for kid's games."

Harry muttered back to him, "In this realm, we have nothing but time. So, get used to it. If we are going to get out of here, this is what we have to do." Then, out loud to the Spirit of Time, Harry said, "Spirit of Time, we are ready to hear these riddles."

The Spirit of Time replied, "I will give them to you one at a time. To receive the next riddle, you must correctly answer the one before it. There a total of five. Here is the first. What can't you see that is always before you?"

Harry sat down, and began musing aloud, “What the heck does that mean? You can always see things that are before you, unless they are invisible, but surely that couldn’t be the answer. There aren’t always invisible people in front of you.”

Voldemort snorted, “You’re pathetic, Potter. To think that they say you are one of the most brilliant students to come to Hogwarts is a joke. It is a time riddle, Potter.” Voldemort turned to the Spirit of Time, “The answer is the future. Next riddle.”

The Spirit of Time laughed gleefully, “Excellent. The next riddle is this. What starts with “e” ends with “e” and contains only one letter?”

Voldemort stood bewildered at this one. Harry chuckled, “You haven’t had contact by Post in a long time, Tom. The answer to this one is an envelope.”

The Spirit of Time cackled, “That’s two. Three more to go. The next one goes like this. What do you break by saying just one word?”

Voldemort snorted, “This one is child’s play. The answer is silence.”

The Spirit of Time crossed his arms and said, “It seems that my riddles aren’t challenging you enough, but since your name is that of our subject, I suppose that I should have expected you to be a master. The next riddle is based on Muggle principles of transportation. Two planes take off at the same exact moment. They are flying across the Atlantic. One leaves New York and is flying to Paris at 500 miles per hour. The other leaves Paris and is flying to New York at only 450 miles per hour because of a strong head wind . Which one will be closer to Paris when they meet?”

Voldemort turned to Harry and growled, “You have had contact with the Muggle world much more recently than I, Potter. Figure this one out.”

Harry replied, “It has to be a play on words somehow. Unless you knew the distance between the two cities, then this would be impossible to answer. Riddles don’t require knowledge that is out of the ordinary to be answered, so there has to be a trick to it.” Harry asked the Spirit of Time, “Could I hear the riddle again?”

The Spirit of Time nodded and repeated the riddle. Harry grinned, “I get it. If the two of them are meeting, then they are at the same place. The answer is neither. They are both the same distance from Paris.”

The Spirit of Time nodded. “Very good. The final riddle is the hurdle you must pass to reach the second challenge. Each of you will be forced to make a statement to me. If you lie, I will kill you. If you tell the truth, I will kill the other wizard with you. Now, what do each of you have to say to me?”

Harry and Voldemort turned to each other in bewilderment. Voldemort asked, “Do you have any clue what to say?”

Harry replied thoughtfully, “It has to be a paradox of some kind. Something that would force him into inaction. Otherwise one of us will be killed, and the other will be stuck here forever.”

The two wizards sat pondering this for some time, until it seemed that the Spirit of Time was starting to get impatient. “If the two of you don’t answer soon, then I will just kill both of you, and end this.”

At that moment the answer came to Harry, and he smiled. He whispered in an aside to Voldemort, “Just say exactly what I say to him, and we will be fine.” Harry stood up and walked towards the Spirit of Time. “You will kill me.”

Voldemort echoed him, “You will kill me.”

The Spirit of Time reared, “You are the first wizards to ever get the correct answer to this riddle. On to the second challenge.” The Spirit of Time motioned for the two of them to grab the broomsticks. “The second challenge is an obstacle course that I have designed. The object is to pass through this without being knocked from your broom. If either of you fail, then you shall remain here forever.”

Harry nodded, “We get the picture.”

Voldemort growled, “We have a problem, Potter.”

“What is that, Tom?”

“I haven’t ridden a broom in over thirty years.”

Harry chortled, “Well, just retrieve the information on how from my brain.”

Voldemort entered Harry’s brain to find the information on broom handling pushed to the forefront of his brain. Voldemort could not resist the temptation of trying to dig farther into Harry’s brain to attempt to gain some information that would aid him later. However, upon trying to delve farther into Harry’s mind, Voldemort found himself being forcefully thrown to the ground by the defenses in Harry’s mind. Harry snorted, “That was stupid. You should have known that I wouldn’t be that lax with you in my mind.”

Voldemort snarled, “Whatever, Potter. Let us continue with this ridiculous endeavor, so that I might return to my minions.”

Harry swung a leg over his broom, “Let’s do it then.” Voldemort followed suit, and the two of them rose in the air until they were level with the Spirit of Time.

The Spirit of Time pointed, “There is the entrance to the obstacle course. You may begin whenever you are ready. Remember, if you fall from your broom, then you are disqualified, and you will remain here forever.”

Harry looked over his shoulder at Voldemort, “Let’s get this over with, Tom.” The two wizards darted into the obstacle course. Both of them were met with heavy opposition the moment they entered. Two Chinese Fireballs began following them breathing fire at the tails of their broomsticks. Harry began hurling Conjunctivitis Curses over his shoulder with his left hand while attempting to guide the broomstick to dodge the various obstacles that kept appearing at the last minute in front of him. Not to mention, the fire from the dragon behind him was causing a great deal of difficulty. Voldemort was sticking close to him, and using his wand to cast Reductor Curses and Explosion Hexes at the objects in front of him. At one point during the duration of the obstacle course, Harry caught himself thinking, ‘Its too bad Tom had to turn to evil. The two of us actually make a good team.’ Harry immediately shook that thought out of his head. The fact remained that after this was over, the two of them would be enemies once again, and they would both be trying to kill each other. After what seemed like hours to the two overtaxed and exhausted wizards, they finally emerged from the obstacle course. They both landed their brooms, and Harry collapsed onto the ground saying, “I need a nap.”

Voldemort sank down weakly beside him, “For once in our lives, Potter, I actually agree with you.”

The Spirit of Time chose that moment to appear before them. He laughed with glee, “That was extremely entertaining. Although, I must say that I never expected the two of you to make it out of there.”

Harry sighed as he laid back on the ground, “I’m happy that we disappointed you.”

The Spirit of Time continued, “Are the two of you ready for the third challenge?”

Harry let out a long breath, “I assume that we are as ready as we will ever be.”

The Spirit of Time smiled, “Excellent. The third task is for the two of you to defeat clones of yourselves in combat with swords.” The Spirit raised his hands above his head, and two bolts of lightning hit the ground. As soon as the haze cleared from the lightning strikes it became apparent that where the two bolts had struck the ground, there were now standing two replicas of Harry and Voldemort. Each of them were slightly yellowish in complexion, so that they could be differentiated from the originals. Both of them were holding dueling swords in their hands, and were standing in dueling stances at the ready.

Harry sighed as he stood up, “This is not going to be fun.”

Voldemort stood up beside him, “No, it is not. However, I do not intend to die here.”

Harry replied, “Nor do I.” Both of them conjured swords, and squared off.

The Spirit of Time interjected, "That will be the last magic that the two of you are allowed to do in this challenge. Your clones will perform no magic either." He clapped his hands together, "You may begin."

As soon as the second clap faded away, the two clones sprang into action. Harry and Voldemort were ready for them, and the duel commenced. Harry went one on one with his clone version, while Voldemort did the same with his. After about an hour of matching each other blow for blow and parry for parry. Harry said aloud to Voldemort, "This is never going to work. We can't defeat ourselves. We have to duel the other one's clone. That way there will be a way to surprise them."

Voldemort grunted his assent. So, Harry took a moment to gauge the time it would take to switch, and yelled, "Now."

Voldemort rolled away from his clone, while Harry did a back flip over Voldemort as he rolled away. This left Voldemort's clone swinging at nothing, and he was completely off balance to attempt to counter the blows Harry immediately rained at him upon landing from the back flip. It took only seconds for Harry to slip past the clone's guard and land a mortal wound.

Voldemort did not fare so well against Harry's clone. Harry's clone was in a better position to prepare for the switch, and immediately began hacking away at Voldemort. Voldemort was forced to assume a defensive stance, and attempt to keep Harry's clone off of him until Harry could finish Voldemort's clone off. Harry did so and then turned his attention to his own clone. While the clone had all of Harry's skills and powers it was impossible for him to stand up to the assault from both of the wizards in front of him. It was only a matter of time before they began to nick blows past his guard, and as he slowly wore out from the constant assault, Harry finally scored a major wound under the arm, and caused the clone to drop his sword. Voldemort quickly took advantage of this and plunged his sword into the clone's chest. Then, he turned to the real Harry, "Our truce is over. Your death will make this one seem kind and compassionate, Potter."

Harry smiled, "We shall see, Tom. We shall see." Harry turned to the Spirit of Time, "I believe that we have fulfilled all the requirements that you made of us. It is time for us to return to the present."

The Spirit of Time nodded, "I have enjoyed the display of entertainment that you have shown me, Mr. Potter. I have a reward for you." He switched his glance over to Voldemort, "You may go." Voldemort disappeared in an instant to ride the eddies of time back to the present.

Harry asked, "What reward do you have for me, Spirit of Time?"

The Spirit of Time waved his hand, and the spirits of Lily and James materialized before Harry. James grinned as he glided up to Harry, "You have done an excellent job thus far, my son. I am proud of you."

Lily smiled, "We love you, Harry. Remember that."

Harry smiled as tears sprang into his eyes, "I know, Mum. I love both of you very much."

Another voice intruded on the scene, "Are those tears I see, Harry? It seems that you have grown up somewhat since I have been gone."

Harry's face lit up even more as he spun around to the source of the voice, "Sirius?"

Sirius grinned, "In the flesh."

Lily frowned at him, "That was a horrible joke, Sirius."

Harry and James chuckled. James said, "I think that the Marauders enjoyed it, Padfoot. So, you will have to ignore my beautiful wife, who has no taste in humor."

Lily glared daggers at her husband, but said nothing. Harry asked, "So does this mean that I get to be a Marauder, now?"

James nodded, "As soon as we come up with a Marauder name for you."

Sirius asked, "So, what is it going to be, Prongs?"

Lily answered for the three men as they mused, "I think it should be Goldenwing."

James' face lit up, "Hey, that's good. Lily, I'm impressed. That was really a great name." James and Sirius turned to face Harry and said in unison, "We now dub you Goldenwing, a true Marauder."

Harry bowed, "I accept this honor, and as soon as I finish with Tom, I will do everything in my power to return the fear of Marauder pranks to Hogwarts."

James grinned, "That's my boy."

Sirius laughed, "I always told you that your spirit was hiding behind Lily's sense in that boy."

Lily smiled, "At least he inherited some sense from me. His father definitely didn't have any."

James protested, "I resemble that, and so does he." James pointed at Sirius as he said this.

The Spirit of Time interrupted them, "I am afraid that your time is over, Harry. You must return to the present. Voldemort has a head start on you. If you would like to have anything left to fight for, you must return to the present now."

Harry nodded. Tears sprang into his eyes once again. He said to the three spirits standing before him, "I will see you again, one day. I promise. Until then, I love you all."

The three of them said together as Harry faded from sight, "We love you, too, Harry."

This was the last thing Harry heard as he was swept away in the river of time as it progressed back to the present.

21. The Chalice

Voldemort appeared back in the mainstream of time to find himself in his lair. Bellatrix looked at him. Wormtail immediately fell to his knees, “My Lord, you have finally returned.”

Bellatrix bowed quickly, “Master, we have dire news.”

Voldemort eyed the two Death Eaters coldly, “What has happened in my absence?”

Bellatrix replied, “We have been losing the fight against the Aurors, My Lord. They have captured at least thirty of our numbers.”

Voldemort sneered, “Is that the best that I can expect of my loyal Death Eaters? All of you are pathetic. However, we will deal with that later. I have a head start on Potter, so we must use it. I need some way to increase my powers. I know there are many artifacts left over from the wars between Morgana and Merlin. I want a team of Death Eaters researching to determine the location of one of these items. Any one of them will be sufficient for me to use to power another transformation. I will need this power to finish Potter.”

Wormtail and Bellatrix both bowed again, and then practically fled from the Dark Lord’s presence. Unbeknownst to Voldemort or any of the Death Eaters, Remus Lupin was present in the room using one of the invisibility boosters developed by the twins. Upon hearing this information, he ran from the room, and made it beyond the Apparation wards to Apparate back to Hogsmeade and run quickly back to the castle.

He ran up to Dumbledore’s office and gasped out the password. Once he entered the room, Dumbledore asked, “What is it, Remus?”

Remus stood there gasping for breath. He finally managed to say, “Voldemort is back.”

Dumbledore stood up in shock and anger. “If Voldemort is back and Harry isn’t, then we have to assume the worst.”

Remus shook his head, “Voldemort said that he had a lead on Harry. Since I don’t really understand this whole time travel thing, then I can only assume that means Harry will be returning soon.”

Dumbledore smiled, “Then, there is still hope. Harry must have succeeded in stopping him from altering the past.”

Remus asked, “Would we even know if the past had been altered?”

Dumbledore shrugged, “I suppose not. However, we must assume that this is the way things are supposed to be. If it isn’t, then I am sure Harry will inform us. I will summon the rest of the Order for a meeting. If you would be so kind, go to the Gryffindor common room and get our student members. I believe that Miss Lovegood is there as well.”

Remus nodded, “I’ll be back shortly.”

Remus walked through the corridors to the Gryffindor common room. He gave the password to the Fat Lady and stepped through the portrait hole. Ginny noticed him first, and smiled, “Hey, Remus. What’s up?”

Remus smiled, “Order meeting. Let’s go.”

Ginny immediately asked, “Does this mean that Harry is back?”

Remus shook his head, “No, he isn’t back yet.”

Ginny sighed, “Oh, well. I could always hope.”

Ron put an arm around his younger sister’s shoulders, “Don’t worry, Ginny. He’ll be back. We just have to be patient.”

Ginny said dispiritedly, “He’s been gone so long, though. He left at the end of September, and it’s January. He missed Christmas. He’s even going to miss Valentine’s Day if he doesn’t return soon.”

Remus chuckled, "I'm sure that he will be back soon. I don't think there exists a force on Earth powerful enough to keep Harry away from you, Ginny."

Ginny blushed. Hermione patted Ginny on the back, "Remus is right, Ginny. Harry will come back to you. Just have faith in him."

Ginny replied, "I do. I'm just tired of waiting."

The group of Order members reached Dumbledore's office to find the other professors already assembled, along with the Weasleys and the Longbottoms. Dumbledore spoke up as they entered, "We are waiting on the Aurors, now."

A few moments later, Kingsley, Dawlish, and Adams popped out of the fire. Dawlish said, "We're here."

Dumbledore sat down behind his desk, "Excellent, now we may begin."

Ron interrupted Dumbledore, "Where are Sturgis, Dedalus, and Hestia?"

Dumbledore smiled, "Excellent question. The three of them are out on assignment, and couldn't be contacted. Now, to the business at hand. Remus, since you are the one that discovered this information, I will let you give them the news."

Remus took a deep breath, "Our worst fears have been realized. Voldemort has returned." There was a collective intake of breath around the room. Remus continued, "His first order of business upon returning was to send his Death Eaters in search of information about some of Merlin and Morgana's lost artifacts. He said that anyone of them would be adequate to power a transformation that would make him as strong as Harry."

Snape muttered, "That isn't good."

Dumbledore shook his head, "No, Severus, it isn't. We must decide what we are going to do to stop Voldemort from getting any of these artifacts."

A voice echoed through the room, "If I'm not mistaken, there is only one still in existence, but I will have to check with Merlin to be for sure."

The entire group of Order members swung their heads back and forth to see where the voice was coming from. They could see no one until Tonks gasped and pointed to the corner of the office where a shimmering light was dancing about. Harry materialized directly into this light, and then it slowly died away. Ginny squealed, "Harry!" She was out of her seat and across the room, throwing herself into his arms before anyone else could move or speak.

Harry wrapped his arms around Ginny, and pressed his lips to hers in a passionate and fiery kiss. He stepped back a moment later and said, "I could get used to greetings like that."

Ginny smiled fiercely, "You better. I plan on giving them to you for years to come."

Harry turned to look at Dumbledore, "Albus, could you show me your memory of the Prophecy?"

Dumbledore seemed startled, "Why, Harry?"

Harry raised a hand to forestall further questions, "Humor me, and I will explain everything."

Dumbledore nodded as he removed his Pensieve from the cabinet behind him. He put his wand tip to the side of his head and drew out the tendril of thought that was his memory of the Prophecy. A tap of the wand to the side of the bowl resulted in an image of Sybill Trelawney emerging from the bowl. She began to speak, and the words brought tears of joy to Harry's eyes.

THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES ... BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRICE DEFIED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES ... AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWS NOT ... AND EITHER MUST DIE AT THE HAND OF THE OTHER FOR NEITHER CAN LIVE WHILE THE OTHER SURVIVES ... THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD WILL BE BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES...

Hermione asked, "Harry, why are you crying?"

Harry smiled, "Everything is fixed. It is the way it should be."

Ron said, "I'm confused. What are you talking about?"

Harry took a deep breath, "Everybody, get comfortable. This is going to be a long story. For lack of a better way to explain it, I have been to the past, back to a present that none of you remember, and then back to the past again. Now, I have returned."

Hermione asked, "What do you mean a present we don't remember?"

Harry began to explain, "I'll tell this story from the beginning and all of you should understand. When I left to go to the past, I went to just before the final battle between Albus and Grindelwald. I met all of the Heirs, and went with Hilda and Albus into Grindelwald's castle. There I faced Voldemort and allowed Albus and Hilda to continue after Grindelwald." Harry paused for breath, and Albus interrupted.

"I presume that you performed a Memory Charm on me. That is why I don't remember this occurring."

Harry replied, "Yes, and no. I did perform a Memory Charm on you, but that is not why you can't remember what occurred. I will get to that part of the story soon enough."

Albus chuckled, "Then, I shall strive to be patient."

Harry continued the story, "I defeated Voldemort, while Nicholas and Grandfather led the forces outside the castle to victory. I forced Voldemort to return to the present, and then continued on to make sure everything else went as it should."

Bill asked, "You met your grandfather?"

Charlie asked, "Who's Nicholas?"

Harry smiled, "Yes, I met my grandfather. Nicholas was the Heir of Ravenclaw. The man that created the Sorcerer's Stone."

Remus smiled, "I'm glad you got to meet William, Harry. He was a good man."

Harry smiled and nodded, "I noticed. He and I would have had a lot of fun if he was alive. To continue with the story, After I insured that Albus had defeated Grindelwald, I performed a Memory Charm on him. Then, I returned to the present. Unfortunately, it wasn't the present that I remembered. I'm still not for sure exactly what we altered, but somehow the Prophecy was changed. Since the Prophecy had changed, a great number of things were different when I returned to the present."

Ginny asked, "Was it anything major?"

Harry snorted, "You better believe it. This is the alternate Prophecy." Harry flicked a finger at Dumbledore's Pensieve sitting on the desk. Yet another image of Sybill Trelawney rose up out of the bowl, and began to speak.

THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD APPROACHES...BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRICE DEFIED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES... AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWS NOT, AND NEITHER OF THEM CAN SURVIVE AND LET THE WORLD LIVE...THE TWO MUST DIE FOR THE WORLD TO SURVIVE... THEY WILL DESTROY ONE ANOTHER OR THE DARK LORD WILL DESTROY THE WORLD... THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD WILL BE BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES...

Everyone in the room gasped as they heard this Prophecy. Ginny shuddered, "Are you telling me that this could have been the Prophecy?"

Harry nodded. Ginny continued, "That would mean you would die whether you won or not."

Harry nodded again, "Which is why in this alternate reality you and I were not together."

Ginny gasped, "I don't even want to imagine that."

Harry sighed, "I had to live it. The first time that I saw you, you ran in the other direction, and Hermione told me to stay away from you."

Hermione stared at Harry open-mouth, "We were mean to you?"

Harry nodded, "You all kept your distance from me because I wanted it that way. The Harry that was created for the parallel universe didn't want anyone to get close to him, because he was afraid of losing people he cared about. So, apparently if he cared about no one, he would have nothing to lose."

Ginny wrapped her arms around Harry and hugged him close, "How horrible. I don't think that I could live without you, Harry."

Harry returned the hug, "You won't have to. I'm not going anywhere."

Albus cleared his throat loudly to break up the moment, "I am sure that the two of you will have plenty of time for that later. For now, the rest of us would like to know how you repaired things from this alternate reality?"

Harry sighed, "I didn't. Voldemort went back in time again. He had succeeded in altering something, but it wasn't enough. In fact, I went to the point of going to him and taunting him about the fact that he failed. So, he prepared, and went back in time to try and destroy me as a baby. I didn't expect him to succeed, but he has discovered the Lost Spells of Morgana and Merlin. Dueling him is no laughing matter anymore."

Snape muttered, "This is bad."

Harry nodded, "We are going to have to be very careful. The next time Voldemort attacks, people are going to die. I don't even know if I will be able to defeat him if he gets the Chalice."

Ginny pecked him on the cheek, "You will. I have faith."

Harry smiled, "On with the story. I followed Voldemort back in time again. This time to that fateful Halloween night. We met, and I challenged him. Then, I drew him into an empty dimension. We dueled. I won. He died. We unbalanced time, and the Forces of Time birthed the Spirit of Time. We were pulled into his realm and the two of us had to fight our way out."

Ron asked, "I'm confused. What is the Spirit of Time?"

Harry cleared his throat, "This is back to the basics, Ron. You know that there are Forces of Nature, right?"

Ron nodded, "Of course."

"Same concept applies to magic. Every sphere of magic is defined and controlled by a force just like the Forces of Nature. The difference between the two of them is that when Forces of Magic are upset, they can manifest themselves as sentient spirits. We upset the balance of time, so it became the Spirit of Time. I'm not going to go into details, but Voldemort and I were forced to work together to escape the Spirit of Time's realm. We did so, and the Spirit of Time fixed it so that it was as if none of it had ever happened."

Hermione tried to gain some clarification, "So what you're saying is that nothing you experience happened?"

Harry waved his hand in a see-sawing gesture, "Yes, and no. It happened, but the only people that can remember that it occurred are Voldemort and I. As far as the rest of you are concerned, it didn't happen."

Remus smiled, "Okay, I think I understand all this."

Harry chuckled, "Good. Now, it's my turn to ask questions. What has been going on with the war while I was away?"

Dawlish crowed, "Thanks to the Weasley twins inventions, we were able to track the Death Eaters back to their base. We took thirty-two of them into custody. They are at Azkaban, now. Five were killed. Not to mention several giants and trolls that we eliminated."

Harry smiled, "Excellent. Fred, George, I want to thank you for all the hard work that you put into that tracking device."

The twins both shook their heads, "We did the easy part. Remus is the one that got the tracking unit on one of the Death Eaters."

Harry turned to Remus, "So, it seems your spying missions have paid off."

Remus nodded, "Yes, Harry, they have."

Harry walked over and clapped Remus on the back, "It seems that the Marauders will strike again."

Remus sighed, "I'm the only Marauder left, Harry."

Harry grinned, "Not anymore. I have been officially named a Marauder."

Remus raised one eyebrow, and cocked his head to look up at Harry, "By whom?"

Harry shrugged, "By the people most suited to do so. James Potter and Sirius Black."

Remus replied, "Harry, how would they do something like that?"

Harry smiled once more as he thought back to meeting his parents, "Being dead doesn't stop you from communicating with someone in the Spirit of Time's realm. I got to see Mum and Dad and Sirius. I don't think Mum was very happy with them inducting me into the Marauders, though."

Remus laughed, "That's Lily, alright."

Harry paused for a moment, "I guess since I am a Marauder now, I should call you Moony from now on."

Remus nodded, "Yes, I suppose you should. What am I supposed to call you?"

Harry bowed, "Goldenwing, at your service."

Remus smiled, "I presume that Lily named you. James and Sirius didn't have enough sense to come up with that."

Harry nodded, "Of course. My Mum must have been great."

Remus smiled as he reminisced, "Yes, she was."

Harry sighed, "As much as I would love to continue this conversation with you, Moony, Albus and I need to go talk to Merlin about this Chalice."

Snape echoed, "Merlin?"

Ron asked, "What exactly is this Chalice? You've mentioned it twice."

Harry shrugged, "I don't really know much about it. It is called the Chalice of Indestructibility. I know that Morgana created it to be a wellspring of power for her during her battles with Merlin. What powers it actually contains, though, I have no idea. That's why Albus and I need to go speak to Merlin about it. He will be able to tell us more."

Snape finally managed to ask, "Do you plan to go back that far in time?"

Harry shook his head, "No, of course not. I would be gone for over a year to go back in time that far. I know where a portrait of Merlin is. We are going to speak to him that way."

Bill asked in awe, "Have you spoken to him before?"

Harry nodded, "Of course. He is my Great-Grandfather in a manner of speaking."

Molly asked, "In what manner is that, Harry?"

Harry chuckled, "Well, there is a whole lot more than one great attached to it. There are a lot of generations between him and me."

Albus stood up and walked around to stand beside Harry, "I am ready to go when you are, Harry."

Harry nodded, "Alright." He turned to Ginny, "We'll be back in a bit." Then, Albus and Harry disappeared from sight.

They reappeared in the Chamber of Merlin, where his portrait resided. Merlin greeted them instantly, "Harry, my boy, so good to see you. It has been quite some time since you came to visit me."

Harry grinned, "Sorry, Grandfather, but Tom has been keeping me busy."

Merlin nodded from his frame, "I am sure that he has. So, who is this that you have brought with you. He looks familiar."

Harry laughed, "That's probably because he looks like you. This is another of your descendants. He's a Dumbledore."

Merlin clapped his hands together, "Excellent. You must be Albus. Harry has told me so much about you. You remind me a great deal of myself. I am always pleased to meet one of my descendants."

Albus smiled with his customary twinkle present in his eyes, "I am honored to be speaking with you, Merlin. However, Harry and I have come here to discuss very serious matters."

Harry nodded, "True. Grandfather, Tom seeks the Chalice of Indestructibility. I need to know what kind of powers that it will grant him if he obtains it."

Merlin sighed, "I was afraid that something like this would happen. If Tom manages to power a transformation with the Chalice of Indestructibility, it will merge with his body and he will be nearly invincible. The only way to defeat him will be to put his body through so much torture that the Chalice is ejected from his body. Then, you will be able to completely eradicate him."

Harry nodded, "I understand that, but what powers is he going to have?"

Merlin sighed once again, "He will be immune to most spells, just as you are. His powers will probably increase to the point of being able to surmount even your defenses, Harry. Not to mention that he will gain the power to control certain types of dragons."

Harry groaned, "Oh, that's all I need. To have dragons assaulting Hogwarts. The final battle between he and I is going to be bad."

Merlin nodded, "Yes, Harry, it is going to be very bad. I'm afraid."

Albus laid a hand on Harry's shoulder, "Don't worry, Harry. The Order will be right at your side when that day comes."

Harry shook his head, "That's what I'm afraid of. Whoever is at my side that day, most likely won't live to see the next."

Merlin nodded, "That is a risk anyone who champions the Light faces, Harry. It is their choice to fight."

Harry nodded, "I know. I still don't have to like it, though."

Merlin smiled, "No one is asking you to. I don't like it either."

Albus said, "Neither do I."

22. Voldemort's Transformation

The next few days passed by uneventfully, and Harry awoke Saturday morning refreshed and ready for the day. As he was getting ready to walk out, Ron asked, "Where are you going?"

Harry grinned, "Hogsmeade."

Ron asked, "Why are you going to Hogsmeade?"

"I've got some things to make up for."

Ron appeared bewildered, "What are you talking about?"

Harry put a finger to his lips and said, "Shhh. I wasn't here for Christmas. I have some belated gifts to pick up."

Ron chuckled, "Don't worry. I won't spoil it and tell anyone else. Go and have fun."

Harry laughed, "I intend to. I'm going to pick out Ginny's ring as well."

Ron smiled, "Really? I thought that you weren't going to propose until you finished your N.E.W.T.'s."

Harry grinned, "I'm thinking about changing plans just a little. That way I can actually surprise her."

"When?"

"I was thinking about her birthday," replied Harry.

Ron made a waving motion, "You had better get a move on, then."

Harry nodded, and then left the room at a hurried pace. He made his way down into Hogsmeade, and since they had worked the first time, he decided to get the Weasleys and Hermione the exact same gifts that he had given them in the alternate reality. He also decided to stop by and pick Albus up several pairs of socks. Then, he got Neville a pair of dragonhide gloves, and since he wasn't quite sure what to get for Luna, he picked her up a gift certificate to Gladrag's Wizard Wear.

Next, came the moment of truth. Harry walked into the jewelry store to examine the engagement rings. After a couple of hours of agonizing over the different rings, and discussing style with the jeweler, Harry decided on the ring. It was a large two-carat diamond surrounded by glittering emeralds. All in all Harry felt that Ginny would love it. Harry Apparated to Grimmauld Place, and surprised Mrs. Weasley. She looked at Harry in surprise, "Harry, what are you doing here?"

Harry grinned, "Well, I missed Christmas, so I picked up everyone's Christmas presents. I was hoping that you would give out some of them. I'm sure that you will see Bill, Charlie, Arthur, and the twins before I will. I'll handle giving out the ones at Hogwarts."

Molly protested, "Harry, you didn't have to worry about getting us Christmas presents."

Harry smiled, "I wanted to." Harry leaned over and pecked Molly on the cheek. "Bye, Mum." Then, Harry Apparated away.

Molly shook her head, "That boy is mental."

Harry popped back into Dumbledore's office. Dumbledore looked up, "What can I do for you, Harry?"

Harry grinned and tossed a package to Dumbledore, "Open it."

Dumbledore opened the package and pulled out several pairs of thick woolen socks. He smiled, "Thank you, Harry. This is a wonderful gift."

Harry grinned, "After our little conversation in front of the Mirror of Erised, I figured that this would be the perfect gift. You seem to have enough books."

Dumbledore chuckled, "I presume that you want to get along and give out the rest of the presents that you seem to have acquired."

Harry nodded, "I'm sure that we will speak later. I'll be on my way."

Dumbledore nodded, "Good evening, Harry."

Harry walked through the corridors and returned to the Gryffindor common room to find Hermione, Ron, Ginny, Neville, and Luna sitting around chatting.

Harry waved his hand and presents appeared in everyone's lap except Ginny's. Hermione asked, "What is this?"

Harry grinned, "Christmas presents. They're a little late, but hey you'll get over it."

The four students ripped open the packages. Ron crowed over his new set of Quidditch gear. Luna and Neville beamed at Harry after seeing their presents. Hermione paused just long enough to smile at Harry and say thank you before immediately diving into the books to read.

Ginny seemed to pout for a moment, and then put a sunny smile on her face. Harry looked at her, "What's wrong, Ginny?"

She shook her head, "Nothing."

Harry chuckled, "You are a very terrible liar, my dear. You are pouting because you didn't get a present. However, you are very wrong. Yours just can't be wrapped."

Ginny smiled, "What is it?"

Harry waved one of his hands and the window opened. Then, he began making trilling noises. A magnificent blue and gold phoenix soared into the common room and landed on Ginny's shoulder. Harry smiled, "Say hello to your new companion, Ginny."

Ginny stared at the Phoenix in awe. Then, she asked, "Is it male or female? Does it have a name?"

Harry grinned, "Its female, and no she does not have a name. You may call her what you wish."

Ginny smiled, "I think I will call her Aurellia."

Harry nodded, "Excellent name. Now, I hope all of you will humor me. I know we haven't really discussed what happened while I was gone, and I would like to hear what went on around the castle."

Ron snickered, "Well, the only major thing that happened around here was when Malfoy found out that you killed his father. He tried to attack Ginny and me in the Great Hall."

Harry's eyes narrowed, "What happened?"

Ginny grinned, "A Disarming Charm from me, and a Stunning Spell from Ron ended his tirade very quickly."

Harry nodded grimly, "Has he tried anything since?"

Ron shook his head, "No, but he keeps giving us weird looks. I think that he is planning something, but all of us have been really careful about staying together. We don't want to be taken by surprise."

Harry shook his head, "Alright enough of that. On to less sensitive matters. What happened at the first Quidditch match?"

Ginny pouted, "Well, Malfoy beat me to the Snitch, but we won anyway."

Ron nodded, "Natalie, Dennis, and Colin were flying possessed. We were up by two hundred points when Malfoy got the Snitch."

Harry patted Ginny on the back, "Don't worry, sweetheart. You'll get the Snitch next time."

Ginny shook her head, "No, I won't. You're back, and I plan on finding a different Seeker next year. I much prefer to be a Chaser."

Harry smiled, "I know. I was just trying to be..." Harry trailed off with a cry of surprise as his scar gave a twinge and pulled him into another vision.

Harry appeared in a dark forest, where Voldemort stood waiting. Wormtail came sniveling and cowering up to the Dark Lord to bow pathetically at his feet, "M-Master, we have the Chalice."

Voldemort smiled gleefully, “Excellent. Now, I will have the power to destroy Potter once and for all. I will rule unchallenged. Prepare the ceremony.”

Wormtail bowed as he turned and hurried away to do his Master’s bidding. Once he was alone once more Voldemort turned to Harry and said, “You will never discover where we are in time to stop the ceremony, Potter. Now, be gone from my mind.”

Harry felt a rushing sensation around him, and he was forced back to his own body. He awoke to find himself lying in the common room floor with Ginny and Dumbledore looking over him anxiously. Ginny sighed with relief when Harry sat up without apparent difficulty. He looked to Dumbledore while he reached out and squeezed Ginny’s hand reassuringly, “They have the Chalice, Albus. Summon the Order. I am going to your office and see if I can’t break through the shields that Voldemort has erected around his mind.”

With a pop, Harry Apparated to Dumbledore’s office. Ginny looked at the Headmaster, “He sure know how to make an exit, doesn’t he?”

Dumbledore chuckled lightly, “That he does. The sad part is that most of the time, he is completely unaware of how he shocks everyone else when he does things of that nature.” Dumbledore turned to walk from the room, “Now, if you will excuse me, I have work to do.”

Ginny hurried to catch up, “I’m coming with you, Professor.”

Dumbledore nodded down to the young witch. Both of them proceeded to Dumbledore’s office, where they found Harry sitting cross legged on the floor in deep meditation. Dumbledore said, “I think it best if we don’t disturb him. I will summon the Order.” Dumbledore sat down in front of his fire and began to contact members of the Order. They arrived in short order to find things had taken a definite turn for the worse.

Dumbledore explained to them all that Voldemort had obtained the Chalice.

Snape muttered under his breath, “This is bad. This is very bad.”

Remus nodded from his seat next to him, “I know exactly what you mean, Severus.”

The Order continued to throw around ideas for their next course of action, while Harry remained in his meditative state attempting to break down the barriers that had been erected around Voldemort’s mind. Finally after quite some time of intense mental labor, Harry broke through to hear one ominous statement before being ejected from Voldemort’s mind yet again. This statement was, “Prepare for the assault.”

Harry snapped back to himself and looked around at the assembled Order members in the room. He stood up and took charge immediately, “Dawlish, we need surveillance placed on all known or suspected Death Eaters that have not went into hiding. Remus, I’m afraid that you are going to have to go out spying again. We have to find Voldemort’s new hiding place. He is planning an attack, and from the way he made the statement, I suspect it is going to be a very large one. That means that he plans on attacking Hogwarts, The Ministry, or Azkaban. We are all going to have to be ready to go on a moment’s notice. Fred, George, I want stacks of Weasley bombs at Headquarters, the Auror division at the Ministry, and here. That way wherever the Order members are they can pick some up quickly.”

Fred and George jumped up and saluted, “We’ll be ready, Harry.” The two of them grabbed Floo Powder from the shelf and leaped into the flames calling out, “93 Diagon Alley.”

Dawlish, Kingsley, and Adams got up. Dawlish said, “We will begin the surveillance immediately, Harry.”

Remus stood up as well, “I had better go with you. That way when we pick up someone to tail, I will be on the scene.”

Harry called after him, “Moony, be careful.”

Remus nodded before disappearing into the fire, “You too, Goldenwing.”

Harry looked at Albus, “We are going to have to stay on high alert for the time being. If Voldemort is planning an Assault, it is going to happen fast.”

Dumbledore nodded, “I agree. He will move quickly now that he has the Chalice.”

Ginny asked, “Can you beat him now, Harry?”

Harry shrugged, “I don’t know, but I suspect that we are going to find out. I just pray that the two of us don’t wipe out the planet doing so.”

23. Assault on Azkaban

The next couple of weeks passed by without incident. Harry and Dumbledore had several meetings about the Order's activities. Dawlish and Remus were coordinating spying and surveillance. Thus far they had had no luck in finding Voldemort's new base of operations. One day, Harry stepped into Dumbledore's office. Dumbledore looked up as Harry entered and shook his head, "I just got a progress report from Kingsley. They still haven't found anything."

Harry shrugged, "I didn't expect much. I just came by to get permission to use the Astronomy Tower for Valentine's Day."

Dumbledore smiled and chuckled, "And what did you have in mind for young Miss Weasley?"

Harry smiled, "I'm not planning on proposing yet. It just wouldn't be romantic enough in the atmosphere of tension around the castle right now. If I'm still around after Voldemort attacks, I'll propose."

Dumbledore nodded, "Have you picked out the ring yet?"

Harry nodded, "You better believe it."

Dumbledore asked, "Have you shown it to anyone?"

Harry shook his head, "Only the jeweler. Ginny is going to be the first person to lay eyes on that ring."

Dumbledore beamed, "That is as it should be. Hilda was the first person to see her ring."

Harry quirked an eyebrow, "I didn't know that you had proposed to Hilda."

Dumbledore smiled, "Yes, I did so a week before the final battle. We were to be married as soon as Grindelwald was defeated. Alas, it was not to be."

Harry sighed, "I'm sorry that I couldn't change things, Albus."

Albus shook his head, "It isn't your fault. It would have been too dangerous to change anything."

Harry sighed again, "I know, but that doesn't make it any easier."

Albus smiled, "It was a long time ago. Time goes on."

Harry smiled, "Yes, it does. I'll be going. I assume that I have permission to take her up the tower tomorrow night."

Dumbledore chuckled, "Of course, Harry. You deserve to have a little fun."

Harry replied, "I just wish that I had time to do it a little more often."

"You will, Harry. One day this will all be over, and the only concerns in your life will be your wonderful wife, your wonderful children, and how to get your students to pay attention in Defense Against the Dark Arts class."

Harry laughed, "I hope you're right. I really do. Well, I have to go tell Dobby that tomorrow night is on. I'll need plenty of help if I am going to get this set up." Harry left Dumbledore's office in a rush, and headed down to the kitchens to alert Dobby to the plan. Once he was sure that Dobby knew what he was supposed to do, Harry returned to the common room.

Ginny eyed Harry suspiciously, "Where have you been?"

Harry replied easily, "Talking to Dumbledore."

Ron asked, "About what?"

Harry smirked, "If I wanted you to know, I would tell you."

Ron groaned, "Don't tell me we're going to start this again." Hermione leaned over and whispered in Ron's ear. His face gained an expression of shock for a moment before settling into one of understanding. He mumbled to himself, "Oh, I get it."

Neville snorted and said under his breath but loud enough for the other's to hear, "I highly doubt that."

Ron pointed a finger, "Hey, that's not funny."

Hermione sighed, "It's so true, though. You had to be told."

Ron grumbled good naturedly at the playful teasing that he was being subjected to. Ginny kicked her foot at him, "I think I know what you understood. It's that Harry is up to something considering the fact that Valentine's Day happens to be tomorrow."

Harry made a show of looking around the room as if in disinterest. Then, he said, "I don't have the slightest clue what you are talking about. I was planning on sitting in Gryffindor Tower all night tomorrow."

Ginny protested hotly, "Then, I guess you will be sitting by yourself. I don't intend to stay here all night."

Harry sighed, "I guess that I will just have to be bored, then." Harry stood up, "Goodnight all." He raced up the stairs without even kissing Ginny goodnight.

She gaped after him in surprise, "He didn't even kiss me."

Neville chuckled, "He's good."

Hermione looked over at him, "What do you mean?"

Neville pointed at Ginny, "She's going to be awake half the night now, trying to figure out what he has planned for Valentine's Day, and since he didn't even tell us guys what he was up to, she has no way of finding out. As I said, he's good."

Hermione laughed, "Yes, I guess he is. Ginny, I hope you know how lucky you are to have a guy that will go to that much trouble to surprise you."

Ron said, "Especially with all the things he has to worry about. I mean, Voldemort could show up tomorrow and kill him for all we know."

Hermione slapped Ron in the side of the head so hard that he flipped sideways out of the chair that he was sitting on. He asked sullenly as he rubbed his head, "What did you do that for?"

Hermione practically snarled at Ron, "Do you ever use your brain before you speak?"

"Why?" Hermione pointed to where Ginny had put her head into her lap and began crying. Luna was sitting next to her, attempting to comfort her. Neville gave Ron a look of disgust.

Hermione replied, "That's why. Don't you think we all know that Harry could die? The only way any of us get through the day is not to mention it, and you go and blurt it out during a conversation about Valentine's Day. Do you have any idea how much you upset Ginny?" By this point, Ginny had leaped up from the couch and raced up the dormitory stairs. Hermione looked over at Luna, "I'll go talk to her."

Ron said as Hermione headed for the stairs, "I'm sorry. I just didn't think..."

Neville interrupted him, "Exactly, Ron. You never think. Try it sometimes." Neville stood up and held out a hand to Luna, "Come on, Luna. I'll walk you back to the Ravenclaw common room." Neville and Luna walked out the portrait hole, while Hermione headed up the stairs to the girl's dormitory, leaving Ron in the room by himself.

Hermione entered the fifth year girl's dormitory to find Ginny lying on her bed, "Ginny, why don't you come to my room so that we can talk?"

Ginny nodded mutely and followed Hermione to the Head Girl's room. The two of them sat down on Hermione's bed and had a long talk which consisted of a great deal of insulting Ron for having no sense, and Hermione allowing Ginny to talk about how much she loved Harry.

The next morning began as usual, Harry greeted Ginny with a kiss and said, "Good morning." Then, he followed this with another kiss, "Happy Valentine's Day."

She smiled back at him, "The same to you. Now, what do you have planned for tonight?"

Harry smirked, "I have no idea what you are talking about." He began humming to himself as they walked down to breakfast. The day seemed to drag by for Ginny, since she couldn't wait to see what Harry had planned. After class, she got ready to go to dinner, but Harry stopped her as they walked out the portrait hole. He shook his head, "We're not going to the Great Hall."

Ginny looked at Harry, "Then, where are we going?"

Harry chuckled, "That is a surprise. Now, I'm going to cast a mild Blinding Charm on you, so that you can't peek."

Ginny smiled slightly, "Alright."

Harry waved his hand in front of her eyes, and Ginny's vision was removed. Harry took her hand and pulled it to his elbow and said, "Now, follow my lead." Ginny did so and the two of them began walking through corridors. Harry took her through a series of wrong turns to insure that she had no idea where they were going, although this did not stop her from asking. Finally they reached the top of the Astronomy Tower. Harry asked as he snapped his fingers to remove the Blinding Charm, "How's this for a view during a candlelit dinner?"

As Ginny's vision returned from the Blinding Charm, she sucked in a gasp of surprise and delight. Sitting on top of the Astronomy Tower beneath a beautiful tapestry of stars was a small table set for two with a sumptuous dinner lying prepared on top of it. There was also a vase of gold and red roses sitting amidst the lit candles in the center of the table. Ginny sighed, "Harry, this is wonderful."

Harry swept past her and pulled out her chair. Then, bowing he said, "You haven't seen anything yet."

Ginny curtsied, "Why, Lord Gryffindor, that is an excellent thing to hear. Although if you're not careful, a girl could get used to this."

Harry smiled as Ginny took her seat, "You had better get used to it, Lady Gryffindor, for I intend to spoil you for the rest of your life."

Harry then walked around the table to take his own seat. Then, Ginny asked, "How did you put all this together?"

Harry grinned, "Dobby. How else?"

Ginny laughed sweetly, "That figures. I don't know what you would do without him."

Harry joined her laughter, "Probably a lot of work."

Ginny snorted, "I doubt it. I just wouldn't get all these romantic dinners."

Harry smiled, "Yes, you would. I would just have to start working on them much sooner than I do."

The two of them continued to banter and chat as they enjoyed the delicious dinner that Dobby had prepared for them. As the dinner was winding down, Harry's scar gave a twinge. His eyes widened in horror and he looked over at Ginny, "Go and get the others. Voldemort has launched an assault on Azkaban." Ginny gave a small squeak of shock before leaping to her feet and racing from the tower, Harry Apparated directly to Dumbledore's office, "It has begun."

Dumbledore immediately asked, "Where?"

Harry answered, "Azkaban. Have the rest of the Order follow as soon as they are alerted. I'm taking whoever Ginny finds and gets here with in the next five minutes."

Dumbledore tapped his wand to a figurine on his desk and within moments Dawlish and Remus popped through the fire. Dawlish asked, "Where is the attack?"

Dumbledore replied, "Azkaban." Dawlish nodded, "I will assemble the Aurors and meet you there." Dawlish grabbed a pinch of Floo Powder and leaped back into the fire. Ginny came running into the office a moment later with Tonks, Ron, Hermione, Neville, Luna, and Snape.

Harry nodded grimly, "Hermione, you're on messenger status. Finish filling in Order members as they arrive. Neville, Ginny, Ron, Tonks, Luna, you have sentry duty in the castle. Hermione, aid them when you're finished with the Order. Albus, Severus, Moony, let's go."

All three men latched onto Harry and he Apparated them all to the far side of the island. The battle was already engaged fast and furiously. There was a huge pulsing black portal that was the source of an army of Giants, Trolls, Acromantulas, and Vampires that were being led by groups of Death Eaters. The golems were holding their own, but it was quickly obvious that they would be overwhelmed by the sheer weight of numbers of dark creatures that were attacking them. Snape asked, "Why aren't there any Dementors?"

Harry replied, "They would be useless against golems. Golems have no feelings of happiness to suck dry so Dementors wouldn't be a lot of help."

A group of Aurors and several more Order members Portkeyed onto the island beside them. Kingsley swore violently when he saw the massive array of dark forces that were spread out beneath the hillside they were standing on, "Damn! This is crazy."

Harry looked over to Dawlish, "I want all of you to concentrate on the Acromantulas and Death Eaters. I'll handle the Trolls and Giants. Ignore the Vampires unless they attack you first. Let's turn the tide of battle."

The Aurors chorused, "Yes, sir."

Dawlish yelled out, "You heard the man. Move!"

Harry turned to look at Remus and Severus, "The two of you, cover me. We're about to see how trolls like whirlwinds." The two wizards beside him grinned in anticipation of what Harry was about to do.

By this time, the Aurors had infiltrated their way down into the ranks of Death Eaters, which disrupted the chain of command. Very quickly, the Giants became disorganized and haphazard. The trolls became confused and started attacking allies as well as enemies. During this confusion, the golems reorganized and began pushing the invaders back towards the portal. Harry stood up and began casting a spell, "I command the winds to obey me. Swirl and blow. Hurricanos!" The Hurricane Spell tore into the ranks of trolls in moments. They were buffeted around and swept from the field of battle. Many of them were deposited out into the ocean. When the vampires saw this, they immediately fell back in retreat towards the portal. Once the Death Eaters realized that the battle was lost, they abandoned the field and Apparated away. The golems made short work of the remaining Acromantulas and Giants, who quickly filed away in retreat. Several members of the Order gathered around Harry a few minutes later.

Dawlish asked, "Why was that so easy?"

Harry replied grimly, "This was a feint, a test. Tom wasn't even here. He just wanted to give his forces a field run." Harry froze, "The castle is in danger. I have to get back to Hogwarts."

While Harry and the others had gone to Azkaban, Ginny and Tonks went on patrol one way, while Ron and Neville went the other. Luna remained in Dumbledore's office with Hermione. During their patrols, Bellatrix Lestrange led a strike force of Death Eaters onto the grounds. Ginny caught sight of them out a window she and Tonks were passing. She looked at Tonks as she leaped onto the window sill, "Go, get Ron and Neville. We have Death Eaters at Hogwarts." Ginny whistled loudly and Aurellia swooped down to latch onto Ginny's shoulders. She took flight out the window to take Ginny to the ground.

Tonks looked out the window to see at least eight hooded and masked figures. Tonks swore loudly, "Damn it. Harry is going to kill me." She raced through the corridors to find backup.

Ginny landed on the ground and yelled out challengingly, "That's as far as you go."

The Death Eaters spun and looked at the young witch, holding sword and wand defiantly before them. Bellatrix cackled, "Well, this couldn't be more perfect. The Dark Lord sent us to retrieve Potter's girlfriend and she has presented herself to us."

Ginny taunted her, “Don’t be so sure of that, Bellatrix. You still have to take me.”

Bellatrix motioned for two of the Death Eaters to attack her. They advanced and one of them paused to fire a Stunning Spell, while the other continued to close in on Ginny. She casually flicked her wand and said, “Protego.” The shield flared into existence, and the spell bounced harmlessly away as Ginny dove forward tucked her body into a roll, and came to her feet just in front of the first Death Eater. Before he could begin to react, Ginny plunged her sword into his abdomen. He fell back gurgling, taking her sword with him. Without pausing in her movements, she almost without thought threw a Full Body Bind at the second Death Eater, “Petrificus Totalus.” He fell frozen to the ground. Ginny calmly looked at Bellatrix, “Are you still so confident?”

Bellatrix cast her mask aside and threw back her hood, “We shall see how confident you are when you are forced to duel the Dark Lord’s chosen.” Bellatrix turned to the other Death Eaters, “Keep anyone from interfering.” Then, she turned her gaze back to Ginny. The two began to duel. The curses flew back and forth between the two witches at a pace one would have to see to believe. During this exchange, Tonks, Ron, Hermione, and Luna came running out the front entrance onto the grounds. The remaining Death Eaters immediately began hurling curses at them. Each of the four dove behind cover, and began to exchange curses with the Death Eaters. Bellatrix finally managed to trip Ginny during mid-flip. Then, a Stunning Spell later, Ginny was beaten. Bellatrix crowed in triumph until she felt the tip of a sword touch her throat.

A swirl of cloak and Neville appeared before her. He grinned with malice, “I wouldn’t be so sure that have won. You still have to deal with me. Now, arm yourself, for I am going to enjoy this.” Bellatrix conjured a sword and the two of them began to fight in earnest. It was immediately clear that Neville was the superior of the two. The battle was so fast paced and exciting that Tonks, Ron, Hermione, Luna, and the Death Eaters stopped fighting to watch. Finally, Neville caught Bellatrix with a Tickling Charm. She paused to counter the Charm and Neville quickly took advantage of the lapse and buried his sword into Bellatrix’s abdomen. Four of the Death Eaters hurled Cruciatus Curses at Neville, while the fifth scurried over to heal Bellatrix. Neville avoided three of the curses, but wasn’t quite quick enough for the fourth. It hit him square in the chest, and he fell to the ground writhing in agony. Ron stunned the Death Eater that was holding Neville under the Cruciatus Curse, but in turn left himself exposed to be stunned by the other three Death Eaters.

Bellatrix grabbed her sword and placed the tip of it to Neville’s throat. She was still bleeding from the stomach wound, but it appeared as if she would live. She yelled, “Enough, or he dies.”

Tonks, Hermione, and Luna stopped attacking again. Tonks called out, “Alright, just don’t hurt him.”

Bellatrix sneered, “We will do as we please.” She looked at one of the other Death Eaters, “Create a Portkey. We’re leaving. Take the girl.” At that moment, a panther slammed into Bellatrix from the side. The sword dropped to the ground at Neville’s side, while Bellatrix was slammed hard to the packed earth by the force of the panther’s body. The panther transformed into Harry and he pointed his hand at the four remaining Death Eaters, “Stupefy.” Four jets of red light sprang from each of his fingers to stun the four Death Eaters. While he was doing this, Neville rolled to his feet grabbing Bellatrix’s dropped sword on the way. He plunged the blade into her body pinning her to the ground.

Harry walked over and looked down at her, “It seems that we finally have you, Bellatrix. You are meeting your fate.”

Bellatrix snarled, “Fine, fetch a healer, and you can take me to prison, Potter.”

Harry looked at Neville, “Do you know anything about prison, Neville?”

Neville shook his head, “I don’t believe so. Prison would be far too good for her.”

Harry nodded, “I agree. Not to mention, I don’t see any healers around.”

Neville made a show of looking back and forth, and then shrugged, “Me neither. I guess she will just have to die.”

Bellatrix gasped, “Are you saying you’re going to let me bleed to death?”

Harry and Neville gave her grim and determined looks. Harry said, "What did you expect from us? You robbed Neville of his parents for sixteen years, and you took my godfather from me. You have gotten exactly what you deserve, Bellatrix."

Hermione walked up to Harry and Neville, "Are the two of you really going to let her die?"

Harry and Neville both looked at Hermione and said simultaneously, "Yes." Neville walked over to Luna, while Harry turned to walk to Ginny. He leaned over and said, "Enervate."

Ginny sat up, "Is it over?"

Harry chuckled, "For the time being."

24. Badger's on the Prowl

A few hours later, most of the Order of the Phoenix was assembled in Dumbledore's office. Sturgis was standing with a sling on his arm. Harry walked over to him and asked, "What happened to your arm?"

Sturgis chuckled, "I caught the bad end of a Cutting Curse. It wasn't too bad, but it damaged the bone slightly. I'll be in the sling for a couple of days."

Harry smiled, "At least it wasn't worse. We can be grateful for that."

At that moment Cornelius Fudge burst into the room with Dawlish and Kingsley hot on his heels. Fudge spat out savagely, "Dumbledore, it has come to my attention that two of your students allowed a ranking Death Eater to die instead of bringing her in for questioning."

Harry raised his eyebrows at Kingsley and Dawlish, who both hung their heads in shame. Every other eye in the room except Neville's was concentrated on this exchange as Cornelius turned to look at Harry, "Now, Potter, I believe I have you right where I want you."

Before Harry could reply, Neville had crossed the room in two quick strides, and grabbed Fudge by the collar. He slammed the Minister of Magic into the wall. Neville snarled at Fudge, "It's time for you to listen, Cornelius. Bellatrix Lestrange got exactly what she deserved, and you will leave everyone alone about what happened with her tonight, or finding a way to discredit Harry will be the least of your worries."

Harry called from over Neville's shoulder, "Cornelius, I think you should remember that you are allowed to keep your job because we allow it. The members of the Order will run the wizarding world after this conflict. You should remember that."

Neville shoved Cornelius roughly towards the door, "Now, it is time for you to leave. We have important things to discuss."

Cornelius cast one malevolent stare at the witches and wizards assembled in the room before straightening his robes and walking out the door with little to none of his dignity intact. Alice looked at Neville sternly, "I can not believe that you did that."

Frank chuckled, "I can. Cornelius deserved every word of it."

Harry laughed as he clapped a hand on Neville's shoulder, "Yes, he did. Now, let's get down to business." The Order members sat down and began discussing the battle.

The next evening at the Dueling Club meeting, Harry stood up and smiled, "We will be holding a dueling tournament over the course of the next several club meetings."

Ron raised his hand, "Harry, is this the best time to be starting a tournament? We do have a match against Hufflepuff on Saturday."

Harry laughed, "I sincerely doubt that this tournament will in any way affect Quidditch, Ron. Now, onto the instructions. This will be a wands only tournament. No physical contact of any kind. We will be having five matches at a time until we get down to the final eight. Then, we will proceed with one match at a time until the tournament is finished and we have a victor. Duels can be won by disarming your opponent, stunning them, binding them, or if they forfeit. You will be disqualified if you attempt to physically harm your opponent, either with spells or actual physical contact. Understood?"

Everyone chorused, "Yes."

Harry continued, "Our dueling judges for the matches will be Professor Tonks, Professor Snape, Remus Lupin, Head Auror Dawlish, and of course, me. I have dropped everyone's name into this hat that Professor Flitwick has been kind enough to charm to randomly pair off sets of duelers for each match. If you lose, you're out. Any questions?"

Everyone shook their heads to indicate a negative. Harry turned to Professor Flitwick, "If you would be so kind as to draw out the first round of duels, Professor."

Professor Flitwick replied, "Of course, Mr. Potter."

As fate would have it the first duel of the evening would be Neville Longbottom against Hermione Granger. The other four duels were pulled from the hat and the first round began.

Neville began the duel with Hermione by casting several Disarming Charms and Stunning Spells one right after another. Hermione did an adequate job of blocking or dodging these curses, but was too wrapped up in defending herself to notice Neville casting another spell. An illusory fire sprang up behind Hermione, and she squeaked as she heard the crackle of flames behind her and turned to look. This was all the opening Neville needed. He whipped his wand, "Petrificus Totalus." Hermione froze and fell to the ground. Neville walked over and performed the counter charm. He looked at Harry as he helped Hermione back to her feet, "I've been waiting to do that to her, since she cast the spell on me in first year."

Harry laughed, as Hermione pouted. He said to her, "Come now, Hermione, you can't expect to win at everything. Neville is an excellent dueler. You couldn't have lost to a finer opponent."

Other duels on this first night included Ron getting to fight Vincent Crabbe, Ginny facing Colin Creevey, and Luna going toe to toe with Ernie MacMillan. Ron won his duel by transforming into a bear and growling at Crabbe. It frightened him so badly that he dropped his wand without even casting a spell. Ron transformed back into his human form and said, "Accio wand."

Ginny's duel with Colin was over just as quickly. She swished her wand, "Windras." A small swirl of wind caught the bottom of his robes and threw the long fabric over his head. By the time he managed to untangle himself, Ginny had already sent a Stunning Spell towards him, and he was far too late to dodge it.

Luna and Ernie's duel was much more even. The two of them danced around hurling Tickling Charms and Leg Tangling Curses at each other until Luna finally caught Ernie with a Tickling Charm, and then finished him with a Disarming Charm.

Harry took his place in the center of the large room and announced, "That is all for this evening. All of you have performed admirably. For those of you that lost, I can only say practice harder. For those of you that won your duels, congratulations. Dismissed."

Everyone filed out of the room talking rapidly. Many of them were bragging about winning their duels, while others were complaining that they shouldn't have had to face the opponent that they went up against. Harry chuckled as his students left the room. His friends walked up to him. Hermione sighed, "I would have liked to have more than one duel."

Harry shrugged, "I'm sorry. You should have beaten Neville if you wanted to duel again."

Hermione made a wry face as Ron laughed at her, "You knew that I wasn't going to beat Neville. He's too good."

Neville smiled, "Thank you, Hermione. I'm flattered that you feel that way."

Luna smiled from next to him, "You know it's true, Honey. With the exception of Harry, you're the most powerful wizard among the students."

Ginny nodded, "She's right, Neville. Your dueling skills are amazing."

Neville shrugged, "I'm not as good as you."

Harry smiled, "I'm sure that we will find out which one of you is better before this tournament is over. If the two of you don't make the finals, I will be shocked."

Ron protested, "What about me?"

Harry grinned, "Ron, you're good, but sooner or later, you are going to have to face one of them, or Malfoy. Any of those three are going to be able to beat you."

"Even with my bear form?"

Harry shook his head, "That isn't going to do you any good. It might have worked on Malfoy, if you hadn't showed him that you could do it. Now, you have no element of surprise, and he will be expecting it. Remember, he is a Death Eater. He's passed his initiation rites, which means he is an accomplished dueler. He is going to be a handful even for Neville and Ginny."

Ron nodded, "I know."

The next afternoon, Harry walked down to the Quidditch pitch with Ginny. Ginny asked, "Since this is our last practice before the game, I wonder what my dear brother has in store for us." Harry chuckled, "Probably nothing good. Ron is as fanatical about quid ditch training as Wood. If the team would put up with it, he would have us down here three times a week."

Ginny snorted, "No kidding. I wish you had kept the captain's seat. You weren't quite so fanatical." Harry chuckled again, "I had more important things to do with my time than be Quidditch Captain."

Ron interrupted them as he walked up to hear Harry's last statement, "Are you crazy? What could be more important than Quidditch?"

Ginny gave Ron a disgusted look, "Do you ever pause to think, Ron? I think that saving the world is a bit more important than Quidditch."

Ron looked sheepish, while Harry laughed loudly, "Actually, my dear, I was talking about spending time with you."

Ginny colored slightly at the blatant flattery and Ron just shook his head, "Ugh! The two of you get into your Quidditch robes and get out onto the pitch."

Harry and Ginny grinned at each other as Ron stalked away. The two of them walked into the changing rooms to get ready for practice. They emerged a few moments later in full Quidditch gear. Ron stood in front of the Quidditch team, "Okay, people. Hufflepuff has improved a lot since last year, but so have we. So, let's get out there and practice. That way on Saturday, we will show Hufflepuff why the Quidditch Cup is sitting in McGonagall's office." The team cheered and took to the air. They practiced for a little over an hour before Ron called a halt to the practice, and the Quidditch team went up to the castle for dinner. Over the course of the next two days, the largest topic of discussion was not the upcoming Quidditch match, but the second round of the dueling tournament.

It amused Harry that no matter where he went, he could hear an endless amount of chatter about who everyone thought would make the finals. Finally, Thursday evening rolled around and it was time for another round of duels. Harry motioned for quiet as he took his place in the center of the room, "Everyone who is not still in the tournament, would you please step back against the walls to give us room. For those of you who are still competing, the matches will be conducted the same way as Monday. Professor Flitwick will be drawing the pairings from the hat, and the rules remain the same. Any question?"

No one seemed to have any, so Harry continued, "Well, then, let's get started. Professor Flitwick, if you please." Professor Flitwick drew out the first five pairs of duelers. Unfortunately, Luna ended up paired against Draco Malfoy. Ron squared off against no one other than Michael Corner. Harry whispered to her just before the match began, "Good luck. Be careful." The two squared off, and prepared to begin.

Lupin looked at them as Harry walked away to judge another match, "Begin."

Luna went immediately on the offensive, hurling Stunning Spells as fast as she could cast them. Draco dodged or blocked these spells and began casting Sticking Charms on the floor around Luna. Once Luna was completely surrounded by sticky floor, Malfoy began throwing hexes directly at her. Luna leaped up in a flip to avoid them, but did not quite clear the sticky area of floor. Her feet stuck as she landed and she toppled sideways onto the floor. Draco lazily pointed his wand at her and said, "Stupefy." The Stunning Spell hit her squarely and Lupin announced Draco to be the winner.

Malfoy called out across the room, "Potter, if that is the best your pupils can do, how do you expect to win a war?" Draco laughed to himself, and then turned around to find Neville Longbottom right in his face. He started in surprise.

Neville growled menacingly, “Malfoy! Before this tournament is over, I will face you, and I promise you will not like the result.” Neville spun on his heel leaving Malfoy standing with his mouth hanging open in shock.

Ron’s match with Corner went considerably better than Luna’s did. The two exchanged curses for a few moments before Ron cast a Reflection Charm and bounced one of Michael’s Tickling Charms back at him. Then, Ron finished him with a Full Body Bind. Ginny’s duel that evening was against Susan Bones, whom she defeated quite easily.

Neville got his first shot at a Slytherin in the form of Theodore Nott. Neville toyed with the boy for a moment or two before ending it with a rolling maneuver that brought him within six inches of his opponent, where he cast a Stunning Spell at point blank range.

Once everyone had dueled, Harry walked back to the center of the room, “I hope everyone has enjoyed the tournament thus far. We will continue with the next round on Monday. Dismissed.”

The students filed out while Harry’s inner circle gathered around him. Luna sighed, “I’m sorry, Harry. I tried to beat Malfoy.”

Harry patted her on the shoulder, “Don’t feel bad, Luna. As much as I hate to say it, Malfoy is an excellent dueler. He has learned from Tom, and he has learned a great deal in this class as well. He is a tough opponent.”

Neville responded with a smirk on his face, “Not tough enough. I intend to handle him.”

Ginny laughed, “Not if I get paired against him first.”

The two of them stared at each other challengingly, until Harry stepped in-between them, “Alright, you two, that’s enough. Save it for the final match.”

Hermione asked shrewdly, “How do you know they won’t have to face each other before then?”

Harry smirked, “Well, everyone knows that Neville and Ginny are at the top of the class. Not even you, Luna, or Ron can keep up with them. I didn’t want the final match to be anti-climatic, so Professor Flitwick and I rigged the Pairing Charm in such a way that it refuses to pair Neville and Ginny against each other.”

Hermione gasped, “Harry, that’s cheating.”

Harry shook his head, “No, it isn’t. I was just insuring that the final match is going to be the best one. If we were giving out prizes, it would be cheating, but since we’re not, it’s all good.”

Friday passed by slowly considering most everyone was anticipating the Quidditch match on Saturday. Saturday morning dawned to find Ron awake extremely early. He walked up to the Head Boy’s room and shook Harry’s shoulder to wake him. Harry turned over to look bleary-eyed at Ron. He said, “Ron, unless Voldemort is attacking somewhere, go away.”

Ron replied impatiently, “Harry, we’ve got a Quidditch match today. We’ve got to check out the pitch.”

Harry asked, “Ron, when I was Quidditch Captain, did I ever wake you up at dawn to go look at the pitch with me?”

Ron replied, “No.”

Harry continued, “Then, go away, and come back at a decent hour.”

Ron protested, “I don’t want to go down there by myself.”

Harry snorted, “That’s the captain’s job.” Then, Harry rolled back over to go back to sleep.

Ron sighed and shook his head before walking down to the pitch. A couple of hours later, Harry got out of bed and went downstairs to meet Ginny for breakfast. He leaned over and pecked Ginny on the lips in greeting. He said, “Do you have any idea what your brother did this morning?”

Ginny laughed, “Let me guess. He woke you up this morning to go check on the pitch with him.”

Harry looked surprised, “How did you know that?”

Ginny laughed again, “Since you weren’t here for the Slytherin match, he drug Dean and Seamus down to the pitch. Ron absolutely hates to do anything alone.”

Harry chuckled, “I guess. He’s going to have to learn. Either that or he’s going to have to learn to like reading with Hermione. He’s never going to be able to tear her away from her books.”

Ginny smiled, “I suppose so. Well, let’s go eat breakfast. We’ll need our strength for the match.”

Harry winked, “That’s right. We get to play Quidditch today.” The two of them walked down to the Great Hall hand in hand. The Gryffindor team ate breakfast together, and then spent the rest of the morning relaxing until they met to get ready and listen to Ron’s pre-match pep talk at 10:30.

Ron paced back and forth, “Alright team. We snuck past Slytherin. Now, we have to really shine to hold that Quidditch Cup. Fletchley has been working the Hufflepuffs mercilessly over the last year. They have improved dramatically, so this won’t be match that it was last year. We’ve got our starting Seeker back, so Ginny can lead the Chasers once again. I expect nothing less than your best today. Now, as soon as they announce us, let’s hit the pitch and do a little showing off.” The team cheered, and then took their places at the door waiting to be announced.

“This is Owen Cauldwell. I am your announcer. First, Hufflepuff, let’s greet your team.” Once, Owen had finished announcing the Hufflepuff team, he began with the Gryffindor team, “Now, to the reigning Quidditch champions. Gryffindor, I give you your Chasers! Ginny Weasley! Natalie McDonald! Colin Creevey! Your Beaters! Seamus Finnigan! Dean Thomas! Your Seeker and former Captain, Harry Potter! Your Keeper and current Captain, Ron Weasley!”

The two teams settled back to the ground and waited for Madam Hooch to begin the match. She said, “Captains, shake hands.” Ron and Justin shook hands. Then, they stepped back and mounted their brooms. Madam Hooch released the Bludgers and Snitch as the two teams rose into the air. Once the two teams were at playing height, Madam Hooch threw the Quaffle into the air, where Natalie was the first to grab it, while Ginny streaked towards the Hufflepuff goals. Natalie fired a pass to Ginny as the Hufflepuff Chasers converged on her, giving Ginny an unobstructed run on Hufflepuff’s Keeper. Ginny neatly put the Quaffle through the left hoop for Gryffindor’s first score. Thirty minutes into the match when Harry spotted the Snitch, Gryffindor was leading by 20, 90-70. Harry raced after the Snitch with Eleanor hot on his heels. However, Harry had a head start and a faster broomstick. Within moments, the Snitch was struggling in Harry’s hand as he held it up in triumph.

Madam Hooch blew her whistle to indicate the end of the match as Owen Cauldwell exclaimed, “Gryffindor wins. 240-70.” The Gryffindors in the stands erupted in cheers and rushed down onto the pitch to congratulate the team as they landed.

25. Draco's Big Mistake

The celebration in Gryffindor Tower that night was as boisterous as ever. Harry supplied a seemingly endless supply of Butterbeer and the celebration lasted well into the night. The entire next day, you could see people practicing dueling all around the school. Everyone that was still in the tournament appeared to want to perform their best in the matches the following night. Harry and Ginny stood looking out a window of the castle watching a group of Hufflepuffs practice. Ginny smiled, "They certainly seem to like getting a shot to test their dueling skills."

Harry nodded, "Yes, they do. I'm just anxious to see who makes it into the final eight. That's when the duels will really be getting interesting to watch."

Ginny playfully slapped at Harry, "Are you saying that I'm not interesting to watch?"

Harry slid an arm around Ginny's waist, and pulled her closer to him. He grinned, "I would love watching you if you were doing nothing more than reading a book."

Ginny giggled as she tilted her head up to Harry's. He smiled down at her, and then leaned down and kissed her. The two of them stood that way lost in each other until they had to break apart for lack of breath. The rest of the day passed by and so did the next until it was time for the Dueling Club meeting.

Harry took his customary place in the center of the room. "Welcome to the third round of the tournament. We will be pairing everyone off just as we did in the last two rounds. After tonight's round, there will be eight remaining duelers. These eight will be drawn into a bracket where they will compete single elimination style until only one remains. Any questions?"

No one had any questions. Harry raised his arms, "Then, let's begin." He turned to Professor Flitwick, "If you would begin, Professor."

Professor Flitwick drew out the pairings for the evening and they began the matches. Ron was the first of Harry's inner circle to fight. He went up against Zacharias Smith. Ron and Zacharias sent curses flying back and forth at each other before Ron attempted to copy Neville's rolling maneuver from the previous meeting. Zacharias anticipated it and dove in the other direction away from Ron. He whipped his wand to fire off a Leg Tangling Charm at Ron. However, his elbow contacted the floor as he was aiming the charm and it zipped past Ron's shoulder. Both of the wizards fell heavily to the ground, but Ron recovered first and rolled back to his feet to send a Stunning Spell at Zacharias as he attempted to regain his feet. The spell hit Zacharias neatly and he fell, stunned.

The next one of Harry's inner circle to duel was Neville. He got another Slytherin in his match-up. This time he would be facing Nicholas Goyle, a younger sixth year cousin of Gregory Goyle. The match was entirely too easy for Neville. He danced sideways to avoid the first couple of curses that his opponent threw at him, and then almost lazily stabbed his wand towards Nicholas Goyle and said, "Stupefy."

Ginny's duel was the last. She went up against Anthony Goldstein from Ravenclaw. She beat him quite quickly. She leaped up over the curses that he threw at her to rain curses down on him from above. Anthony dodged the first two, but was far too slow for the third. He dropped to the ground stunned, and Ginny bowed as she received a round of applause from the surrounding students.

Harry stepped to the center of the room. "We have the list of the final eight duelers. We will hold all four quarter final matches on Thursday night. The semi-finals will be held on Monday night, and the final match will be held on the following Thursday. If you will all wait for a few moments, we will draw out the pairings for the quarter-finals, and announce them." Harry turned to Professor Flitwick, who drew out the first slip of parchment. Harry called out, "The first match will be between Ginny Weasley and Justin Finch-Fletchley." Professor Flitwick drew out another slip of parchment, and Harry announced, "The second match will be between Ron Weasley and Hannah Abbott. The winners of these two matches will face each other in the semi-finals." Harry turned to take the next slip of parchment from Professor Flitwick, "The third match will be between Terry Boot and Dean Thomas. Which leaves Draco Malfoy and Neville Longbottom for the last match of the quarter-finals. Dismissed."

The next three days flew by with little conversation that did not revolve around the dueling tournament. Everyone was excited to watch the tournament, and the final eight contestants were psyched to be in the quarter-finals. Finally, Thursday night arrived, and basically the entire school packed into the dueling room to watch the four matches that would take place on this evening. Harry took his customary place at the center of the room. "I would like to thank everyone for coming to watch the match this evening. I'm sure the contestants will appreciate the support from their housemates. Without further ado, we will begin the duels. If Justin and Ginny will take their places, the first match can begin."

Ginny and Justin stepped onto the dueling platform as Harry stepped to the edge of it. They bowed to each other and assumed dueling stances. Harry waited for a moment to let the anticipation in the crowd build before barking out, "Begin."

The two of them immediately went into action. Ginny was firing off Stunners as quickly as the word left Harry's mouth. However, Justin was ready for them, and dove to the ground and rolled back to his feet, sending several lesser hexes back at Ginny. These she deflected easily with a Shield Charm, and then the two of them squared off and began to circle each other warily. Then, they both attacked again. Again both of them blocked or dodged all of their opponents moves. Justin was beginning to breathe heavily from the exertion. Ginny grinned, "You're better than I thought, Justin. You have learned a great deal in this class."

Justin grinned back, "Well, your boyfriend is an excellent teacher."

Ginny chuckled, "That he is. Now, I believe it is time to take this duel to the next level. See if you can keep up." After saying this, Ginny leaped into the air and made a crisscrossing sweep with her wand, "Smokis Clodis Extremus!" A thick cloud of black smoke erupted from her wand to surround Justin.

Then, Ginny fired several Stunners into the cloud until Harry called out, "Halt. He's down." Harry waved his hand and the cloud of smoke dissipated to reveal Justin lying on the dueling platform, quite obviously stunned. Harry announced, "Ginny is the winner." Harry waved his hand at Justin and said, "Enervate."

Justin stood up and picked up his wand. He grinned, "Well, I gave it a good run."

Ginny smiled back at him, "Yes, you did. I had fun. We will have to do this again sometime."

Justin nodded, "Anytime."

Harry announced, "Now, that the first match is completed, we can begin the second. If Ron Weasley and Hannah Abbott would come onto the stage."

The Hufflepuffs cheered as Hannah stepped up onto the stage, and then the Gryffindors drowned them out as Ron took the stage. The two duelers took their places and bowed to each other. Harry gave them just enough time to assume dueling stances and then he said, "Begin."

Ron and Hannah went into action and began exchanging curses. It seemed that the two of them were equal. They duelled for about half an hour with neither gaining a significant advantage, until Ron made a mistake. He tripped over his own robes and fell to the ground. Before he could regain his feet, Hannah hit him with a Stunning Spell, and the match was over.

Harry grinned as he waved a hand at Ron, "Enervate. This match is finished. Hannah is the winner." The Hufflepuffs cheered, and began chanting Hannah's name. Harry allowed them to cheer for a few more moments before waving his arms for quiet. The crowd began to quiet down, and Harry announced, "It is time to begin the third match. If Terry Boot and Dean Thomas would take the stage, then we can get on with the tournament."

Terry and Dean stepped up onto the stage. Terry grinned, "You're going down, Dean."

Dean snickered, "We'll see about that. Even if you beat me, you won't get past Neville."

Terry nodded, "I'll just have to find out about that. Let's get ready."

The two of them bowed, and then assumed dueling stances and waited for Harry to give them the signal to begin. Harry watched the two of them, and waited for them to tense in anticipation before saying, "Begin."

The two boys began hurling minor hexes at each other. Both of them dodged the curses of the other, but it was obvious that Terry was slightly better. Both of them began to tire as the duel wore on, and finally Terry managed to catch Dean with a Leg Tangling Charm that caused him to begin dancing around madly with his legs kicking wildly. Then, Terry pointed his wand at him and said, "Stupefy." The red jet of light caught Dean square in the chest and he fell backwards.

Harry sighed, "The round goes to Terry Boot. Enervate." Dean got back up and grinned sheepishly at Harry. The Ravenclaws cheered for their victory, until Harry motioned for quiet once again. "Now for the final match of the evening. I would ask Neville Longbottom and Draco Malfoy to take the stage."

The two wizards took their places on the stage. Draco snarled at Neville, "So, I finally face the clumsy oaf."

Neville flashed a feral smile, "It told you that the two of us would meet before this tournament was over, and I promised that you would not like the result. Let this be a small taste of what will happen if we ever meet on the field of battle. Now, defend yourself."

Neville gave a short, curt bow that never required him to remove his eyes from his opponent. Malfoy nodded in return and then assumed a dueling stance. Harry waited long enough for the crowd to draw in a breath before shouting, "Begin."

Neville immediately shouted, "Wingardium Leviosa." He aimed the spell at Malfoy's shoes and flipped him off his feet. This he followed with a series of Stunning Spells that Malfoy rolled out of the way of as he came back to his feet. He countered with a Full Body Bind, but Neville flicked his wand and said, "Protego." The Shield Charm flared into existence and deflected the curse. The two of them went into high action at this point, and began to exchange curses at a pace that had yet to be witnessed in this class, except when Harry was dueling. Harry gazed on proudly as Neville handled everything that Draco could throw at him.

Frank leaned down beside Harry to whisper in his ear, "He has turned out to be one hell of a warrior."

Harry nodded, "Yes, he has. Now, to watch him finish it."

Neville twirled his wand, and said, "Conjuris Draconis!" A dragon appeared right in front of Malfoy, who in shock and terror dropped his wand. Neville merely waved his wand and said, "Accio wand." Malfoy's wand flew across the platform to pass through the dragon and land in Neville's hand. The dragon faded from existence, and Neville threw Draco's wand back to him.

Harry turned to face the crowd, "We have a winner for this round. This match goes to Neville Longbottom." While Harry was saying this, Draco retrieved his wand from the ground where it had fallen when Neville had thrown it back to him. He raised it over his head as if he were about to cast another curse at Neville, but Harry saw him out of the corner of his eye, and waved his hand over his shoulder while saying, "Expelliarmus!" Draco was blasted backwards as his wand was thrown from his hand.

Harry turned to face him as he rolled back to his feet and retrieved his wand. Draco glared at Harry and said, "I will get you one day, Potter."

Harry chuckled, "I look forward to the attempt, Malfoy. Now, go." Malfoy turned and swept from the room with his cloak billowing behind him.

The weekend was filled with conversation about the dueling tournament, although the student population did stop to have some fun. Finally, Monday rolled around, and Harry took his customary place in the center of the room to announce the upcoming duels. He began, "There will only be two duels this evening. This marks the semi-final round. The winners tonight will compete against each other on Thursday for the championship. I look forward to the matches, as I'm sure all of you do. Now, let us get started. Ginny Weasley! Hannah Abbott! I believe that the saying goes ladies first. So, I believe we will let the two of you duel first."

Ginny curtsied to Harry as she took the stage, "You are too gracious, Lord Gryffindor."

Harry grumbled, "Very funny. Don't forget, you will be Lady Gryffindor one day."

Ginny merely smiled in return as Hannah took her place on the stage chuckling at the two of them. Ginny turned to Hannah and the two girls bowed to each other. Then, they assumed dueling stances. Harry said, "Begin."

The two girls began hurling light hexes at each other to test each other. Not a single hex landed. Harry heard a couple of the Aurors that were stationed at the school muttering to each other. One of them said, "Those are probably the two most powerful witches to come through Hogwarts in a long time. Some of our people couldn't take them in a duel."

The other one replied, "No kidding. I know I wouldn't want to face them."

Harry grinned as he heard this, and Ginny and Hannah continued to exchange curses for awhile, until Ginny really began to pick up the tempo. She began rolling back and forth and adding a lot of acrobatic moves, so that Hannah began having difficulty anticipating where the attacks were going to come from.

One of the two Aurors sucked in a deep breath, "Damn."

The other one replied, "You said it."

Finally, after a magnificent backward handspring during which Ginny was laying back and forth with Stunning Spells to keep Hannah on the defensive, Ginny landed and neatly caught Hannah with a Disarming Charm to end the match. Harry stepped back into the center of the ring, "Ginny is the winner. She will be progressing to the finals."

Someone called from the crowd, "Don't act surprised! You knew she was going to win." A ripple of laughter spread through the crowd as Harry took a bow, and Ginny curtsied beside him.

Harry continued, "Now let's find out who her opponent is going to be. If Terry and Neville will take the stage, we will conclude the semi-final round." Neville and Terry jumped onto the stage as Ginny and Hannah stepped down off of it. The Gryffindors and Ravenclaws both let out a huge cheer as the two of them took the stage. Neville and Terry bowed to each other and stepped back into en garde positions. Harry grinned at his pupils, "Begin." The two sprang into action immediately. Both of them spat out three Stunning Spells at the other and then moved to dodge. Terry dove backwards and rolled to his feet to let Neville's curse fly over him, while Neville did a one handed cartwheel to avoid all three curses. The two boys landed and stood staring at each other for just a moment before springing into action once more.

The two Aurors that had been commenting earlier spoke again. The first one said, "These two are just as good as the girls."

The other one nodded, "Potter has done an excellent job training them. With them around, I'm not worried about the future."

While this conversation was ongoing, Neville and Terry were exchanging curses extremely rapidly. Terry was doing an excellent job of keeping up with Neville, and the two of them paused for breath and stood staring at each other after ten minutes or so of heavy dueling. Terry grinned, "I'm doing pretty good. Better than you expected I would say."

Neville chuckled, "You have been an excellent opponent, Terry, but I am afraid that the final match will contain two Gryffindors. It is time for me to cook your goose. Prepare for some fancy footwork."

Neville began casting spells on the floor around Terry. Terry began backing up and stepped on one of the places that Neville had enchanted. He bounced into the air, and then hit another one of the spaces and bounced again. Neville laughed out loud as he jumped onto one of the spaces and catapulted about twelve feet in the air. "What do you think of that? Bouncing Charms on the floor." The two of them bounced around for awhile, with Neville seemingly in control of where they bounced to. The two of them threw curses at each other, but none of them came close to hitting their target, until Neville landed on a space of floor that was not enchanted with a Bouncing Charm, and nailed Terry with a Disarming Charm as he was bouncing up into the air again.

Harry waved his hands and dispelled all the charms while catching Terry with a Levitation Charm and lowering him softly to the stage. He turned to the crowd, "Let's give a round of applause to our duelists from this evening. I would like to congratulate the two who will be competing against each other on Thursday evening for the championship. Neville Longbottom and Ginny Weasley. I am sure that it will be a duel to remember. I would like to thank you all for coming this evening, and will look forward to seeing you all on Thursday evening, for I know none of you will want to miss the final duel of this competition. Dismissed."

Three days flew by remarkably quickly considering everyone's anticipation of the final match between Ginny and Neville. The betting going on around the school reached a pitch that was unrivalled even by the Tri-Wizard Tournament. When Thursday afternoon rolled around and it was time for the Dueling Club meeting to begin, the entire school was to be found packed into the dueling chamber to watch. Harry stepped to the center of the dueling platform and began his speech, "It has been a long and wild ride. The tournament has reached its final match, and I will delay it no further. Ginny, Neville, if you will please take the stage and prepare yourselves, we will give these people the show that they have been waiting for."

Ginny and Neville stepped onto the platform and began doing stretching exercises. Then, the two of them stood straight, and stared each other in the eyes before bowing and then stepping back into ready positions. Harry grinned, for he was the only one aside from Dumbledore that knew how good the two of them were. He uttered into the silence, "You may begin."

The two of them moved so fast that no one was quite sure which of them moved first. Both sent several Stunning Spells and Disarming Charms at the other. Each of these curse were easily avoided, and Neville made a whipping stab motion with his wand while saying something that no one could quite make out. A thick mist of what seemed to be pure shadow erupted from the end of his wand and spread towards Ginny. She grinned, "You've got to do better than that, Neville." A burst of light from the Flare Charm that she cast countered the shadow easily.

While Ginny was thus distracted, Neville conjured a shield on his left arm, and then charged at Ginny, who quickly laid a Tripping Charm on the floor in front of him. Neville hit it and went sprawling forward towards Ginny, who flipped over him as he fell and sent a Stunning Spell straight down at him. Neville rolled onto his back and blocked the spell with his shield, and then leaped back to his feet. As Ginny landed, Neville hurled a Stunning Spell at her, which she barely dodged. It came so close that the wind rush from the jet of red light ruffled her hair. Neville smiled, "That was close, Ginny."

Ginny grinned back, "As the Muggles say, close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades."

Neville looked bewildered for a moment, "What the heck does that mean?"

Ginny shrugged, "I have no idea. Its just something that my Dad told me."

Harry interrupted them, "I'll explain what it means later. I think the crowd is wondering why the two of you are talking instead of fighting."

Neville said defensively, "We were merely catching our breath. Right, Ginny?"

Ginny nodded, "Of course. I'm ready to go now."

Neville didn't bother to reply with words. He just cast several Disarming Charms in a row, while conjuring walls around Ginny to hinder her progress. Ginny decided to play a different game, and cast a Reflection Charm to bounce the Disarming Charms back at Neville, while she Vanished the walls around her. Neville raised his shield to block the reflected Disarming Charms, and Ginny sent a Vanishing Spell at the shield as well. After the Disarming Charms were repelled by the shield, it vanished. Neville grinned again, "Nice touch. I'm impressed."

Ginny laughed, "Then, you will really be impressed by this." She cast another Flare Charm that blinded Neville, and followed it with a Full Body Bind. She dropped her guard for just a moment, since she felt Neville couldn't possibly counterattack without being able to see. However, luck was not with her as Neville dropped sideways and rolled back to his feet sending a Stunning Spell right at Ginny. She dove sideways to avoid the spell since she had no chance of blocking it in time, but the dive was ill-timed, and caused a second delay in regaining her feet. That second was all Neville needed as he neatly caught Ginny with a Stunning Spell to drop her to the floor.

A silence fell over the whole room as the enormity of what they had just seen fell over them. Then a cheer rang out as Harry stepped forward and raised Neville's arm in a show of victory. He waved his other hand, and Ginny got back to her feet. She looked at Neville in shock before asking, "How did you know where I was to attack? You were blinded by the Flare Charm."

Neville chuckled, "Never underestimate the use of good Hearing Enhancement Charm."

Harry laughed, "You have learned well, Neville."

Neville grinned, "I had a good teacher."

Harry clapped him on the back, "Thank you." Then, he turned to address the crowd, "We have a winner. The dueling tournament is over. I give you your champion, Neville Longbottom."

There was another party that night in Gryffindor Tower that would rival any Quidditch celebration. It went on until McGonagall came in and scolded everyone, before sending them to bed.

The next several weeks around the castle passed by quietly with little out of the ordinary occurring. Harry began planning for Ginny's birthday, since he was planning on asking her to marry him on that evening.

The morning of Ginny's birthday came, and Harry greeted her that morning the same way he always did. He kissed her and said, "Good morning, sweetheart."

Ginny smiled and returned the greeting, "Good morning, Harry. Sleep well?"

Harry chuckled, "Wonderfully. I dreamt of you. Now, let's go eat breakfast, I'm starved."

Hermione interrupted, "You go on ahead, Harry. I want to chat with Ginny for a second."

Harry nodded, "Okay, you two get your girl talk out of your system and I'll see you in a few minutes." Harry departed out the portrait hole.

Ginny asked, "So what's up, Hermione?"

Hermione frowned, "You know perfectly well what is up. It's your birthday and Harry didn't even mention it. Do you think he forgot?"

Ginny laughed, "Of course not. He did the same thing last year. He acted like he didn't even know it was my birthday, but he had this marvelous dinner set up for us, and a wonderful birthday gift."

Hermione frowned again, "I don't know. Harry has had a lot on his mind lately. He could have forgotten."

Ron walked up behind them, "Trust me. He didn't forget."

Ginny eyed Ron, "You know something about what he has planned, don't you?"

Ron shook his head, "I know nothing. I just have several suspicions based on hints he has dropped through the year."

Hermione smiled, "You have to tell us."

Ron laughed shortly, "You must be out of your mind. I would rather cut out my tongue."

Ginny advanced on Ron, "We can make you tell us, you know that."

Ron shook his head again, "No, you can't. I know that you and Hermione could do terrible things to me if I don't tell you, but if I do tell you, Harry will find out. Nothing the two of you could do to me would even come close to what he would do to me if I told. So as far as I am concerned, I know nothing. And if you try to get it out of me, I will go to Harry and have him perform a Memory Charm on me, so I won't even know to be able to tell you. Now, it is time for breakfast." With that, he turned and left the two girls standing flabbergasted.

The rest of the day passed with no one mentioning Ginny's birthday around Harry, since he was refraining from saying anything either. At five o'clock, Harry walked up to Ginny in the common room and said, "Milady, may I have the pleasure of your company on your birthday?"

Ginny smiled and stood up to offer her hand to Harry, "I would be honored to accompany you anywhere, Lord Gryffindor."

Harry took her hand, and turned to lead her out the portrait hole. As they departed, Hermione asked Ron, "Okay, now that they are gone, you can tell me what you think Harry has planned."

Ron shrugged, "I think that he is going to propose, tonight."

Hermione gasped, "I thought he was going to wait until after N.E.W.T.'s."

Ron chuckled, "Surprise."

Hermione smiled, "That is so romantic."

Ron snorted, "I guess. Now, I suppose I have my work cut out for me."

Hermione asked, "Why do you say that?"

"I'm going to have a tough act to follow when I propose." said Ron.

Hermione grinned slyly, "When were you planning on doing that?"

Ron eyed Hermione, "I doubt I will plan it. It most likely will be a spur of the moment thing. Planning isn't really my style."

Hermione snorted, "No, I guess not."

Meanwhile, Harry had escorted Ginny to the Room of Requirement, where they walked in for Ginny to see a table set for two. There was a vase full of red roses sitting in the center of the table. The meal was prepared and awaited the two of them. Harry waved his hand and the light dimmed. Ginny looked over at him, "You know, Lord Gryffindor, all of this seems quite familiar."

Harry laughed, "I seem to be getting a sense of déjà vu as well."

Ginny continued to smile, "I don't think that we have to worry about being interrupted by Ron this time."

Harry chuckled at the memory of Ginny's last birthday, "I should hope not."

Suddenly a voice rang out, "No, her birthday will be ruined by me, Potter!" Draco Malfoy leaped out from behind the couch that was in the room to point his wand at Ginny. "Avada Kedavra!" he screamed.

The jet of green light headed straight for Ginny. Harry leaned sideways and pushed her out of the way. He flicked his hand towards the curse, "Reflecto." A mirror flared into existence and bounced the Killing Curse back at Draco, who stared in shock at the fact that a Killing Curse could be rebounded with so simple a spell. The curse hit Draco dead between the eyes and he dropped lifeless to the ground.

Harry sighed as he looked at Ginny, "It seems that our celebration of your birth will have to be postponed. I have to take him to Dumbledore."

Ginny nodded, "I know. I'll come with you."

Harry helped her to her feet and then waved a hand at Draco, "Mobilicorpus." Draco's body floated up to chest level and followed behind Harry and Ginny as they left the Room of Requirement to head for the Headmaster's office.

26. Ready for Ravenclaw

Harry and Ginny entered the Headmaster's office with Draco's body floating along behind them. Dumbledore looked up and sighed, "I was afraid something like this would happen."

Harry shrugged, "He tried to kill Ginny. I reflected the curse back at him."

Ginny nodded to confirm what Harry had said. Dumbledore reached over to grab a pinch of Floo Powder and throw it into the fire. He said clearly, "Dawlish, Auror Headquarters."

A moment later Dawlish's head appeared in the fire. He asked, "What happened this time?"

Dumbledore replied, "I am afraid that our resident Death Eater has openly shown himself to be a follower of Voldemort."

Dawlish smiled, "Good. Now you can kick the slimy little runt out of Hogwarts."

Dumbledore shook his head, "I am afraid that is not to be. He attempted to kill young Miss Weasley."

Dawlish nodded as comprehension dawned on his face, "I see. I take it this means that Harry killed him."

Harry entered the conversation, "Yes, Dawlish, I did, but it was his own Killing Curse that hit him."

Dawlish caught on quickly, "You reflected a Killing Curse. Simply amazing. Although it shouldn't be considering the other things that I have seen you do."

Harry snorted, "I don't need praise for killing people, Dawlish. Its not like I enjoy it."

Dawlish nodded, "I know. I'll send some Aurors over to collect the body. Since it was his own curse that killed him, and we can prove it by using his wand, there won't be any charges placed. Not even Cornelius would be stupid enough to try anything."

Harry said, "That's good to hear. I don't have the patience to deal with him right now." Harry turned to Dumbledore, "If you don't mind, sir. I'm going to take Ginny down to the kitchens so that the two of us can grab a bite to eat in private."

Dumbledore nodded, "I understand, Harry."

Harry and Ginny went down to the kitchens and got Dobby to give them some food. They ate in silence, and then returned to the common room to find Hermione and Ron already back from dinner. Ron asked, "So, how did the romantic evening go?"

Ginny sighed, "It didn't." Then, she hurried up the stairs to her room.

Ron and Hermione stared in shock for a moment before Ron's eyes darkened and he asked, "What did you do to my sister, Harry?"

Harry shook his head, "I didn't do anything. Malfoy was waiting for us in the Room of Requirement. He tried to kill Ginny."

Ron jumped up in fury, "When I get my hands on that bastard, he will wish he was dead."

Harry stopped him with two words, "Too late."

Hermione asked, "What do you mean he's too late?"

Harry let out a long breath, "Draco Malfoy is already dead."

Hermione asked, "How?"

Harry shrugged, "He cast a Killing Curse at Ginny. I reflected it back at him."

Ron said, "So, he killed himself?"

Harry nodded, "More or less."

Hermione shook her head in dismay, "So, he got himself killed and ruined Ginny's birthday."

Harry nodded again, "Yes. Now, I have another problem."

Ron asked, "What's that?"

Harry said, "I was going to propose to Ginny this evening. The diamond was supposed to serve as her birthday present along with the romantic dinner. I can't propose to her now, and to do it in a couple of days just wouldn't be romantic. So, now I have to come up with something else to get her for her birthday."

Ron clapped Harry on the back, "I'm sure you will think of something."

Harry nodded, "I'm sure I will."

The next day, Harry went back to the Headmaster's office and said, "Albus, I need to go into Diagon Alley. You don't mind, do you?"

Dumbledore shook his head, "Of course not. May I inquire as to your activities?"

Harry chuckled, "Of course. I need to pick up Ginny a birthday present since I have decided to postpone proposing to her. Not to mention, I have an idea for when I propose to her, and I need to put the twins to work on it as soon as possible."

Dumbledore eyed Harry for a moment, "Let me guess. This has something to do with Weasley's Whiz Bangs."

Harry laughed, "You know me too well, Albus. I won't be gone long."

Dumbledore nodded, "I'm sure you won't."

Harry Disapparated to Diagon Alley and went into the twin's shop at number 93. Fred looked up, "Hey, Harry, what's up?"

Harry grinned, "I've got a little project for the two of you."

George hurried over in interest, "I'm intrigued. Does this have something to do with the Order?"

Harry shook his head, "No, this is purely personal." Harry proceeded to explain what he wanted them to do.

Once he was finished, George exclaimed, "That is bloody brilliant, Harry."

Fred nodded in agreement, "We will have everything ready for you when you need it."

Harry said, "Thanks, guys. Now, I have to go find a replacement birthday present for Ginny."

Fred's eyes darkened, "We know. Remus came by Headquarters last night and told us what had happened."

George stomped his foot, "At least that slimy little git finally got what was coming to him."

Harry sighed, "I have to be on my way. I'll talk to the two of you later."

"Bye, Harry. " The twins chorused.

Harry wandered through several shops before stopping at Gladrags, and buying Ginny several sets of day robes that she could wear on the weekends when she wasn't in uniform. Harry returned to Hogwarts after making arrangements for the robes to be delivered to the school. That evening Harry walked into the common room after the Dueling Club meeting and deposited several wrapped boxes into Ginny's lap. She looked up at him, "What is this?"

Harry grinned, "I didn't get to give you a birthday present."

Ginny smiled in delight, and tore into the presents like a three year old at Christmas. The other girls came around to oooh and ahhhh over the robes as Ginny opened them and held them up for inspection. After she had opened all of the robes, she jumped up and wrapped her arms around Harry before pressing her lips to his. Then, she said, "Thank you, Harry."

He smiled down at her, "You're welcome, my dear."

Ginny eyed Harry for a moment, and then leaned in closer to him and whispered, “Do you want to go up to your room and make out?”

Harry pecked Ginny on the corner of her lips and said, “Sounds like a wonderful plan to me.” The two of them turned to scamper up the stairs to the Head Boy’s room, while Harry waved a hand at Ginny’s packages. They floated up the stairs to Ginny’s room.

The two of them entered Harry’s room, and Ginny sat down on the bed, and pushed on it with her hand, “Harry, I believe you have a very comfortable bed.”

Harry grinned, “Yes, I do.” Then, Harry dove onto the bed and snaked an arm around Ginny and pulled her close. They began snogging until both of them had to stop for lack of breath, and then began again.

The next several weeks passed by with everyone settling into a routine as the N.E.W.T.’s and O.W.L.’s approached for the fifth and seventh years, and end of the year tests rolled around for everyone else. Finally, came the week of the Quidditch Final between Ravenclaw and Gryffindor. On Tuesday at the final practice before the match, Ron said, “Alright, team, this is it. The big one.”

Harry groaned, “Natalie, you’re closest to him, slap him. He’s channeling Oliver Wood.” The Quidditch team all snickered.

Ron gave Harry an odd look, “Very funny. Now, lets get out there and practice. Dean, Seamus, release the balls. Let’s hit the air.”

The team walked out onto the pitch and took to the air. They practiced for a couple of hours before calling it quits. The team went up to the castle in good spirits. The rest of the week passed by quickly and Saturday morning dawned bright and clear. Ron was on the pitch shortly after the sun crested the horizon. He stamped the ground to test the kickoff. Then, he walked into the stands to check the visibility. When he finally finished his inspection and made his way back up to the castle, the rest of the Gryffindor team had assembled around the breakfast table. Ron looked them over and said, “All of you relax and enjoy the rest of the morning. I expect all of you in the locker room at ten thirty.”

Harry, Dean, and Seamus stood up at attention and saluted. “Yes, sir.” they chorused. The girls laughed as Ron scowled and walked away.

Hermione scolded them, “You shouldn’t be so hard on him.”

Harry chuckled with the girls, “Come on, Hermione, we were just teasing him. He acts like none of us has ever done this before. This will be my thirteenth Quidditch match.”

Hermione sighed, “I know that. He just wants to win.”

Harry nodded, “I know, and he is way too uptight about it. It’s our job to make him lighten up.”

Hermione just shook her head in amusement and followed after Ron. The rest of the team went outside after they finished eating to lounge around the lake. They watched some of the younger students play with the giant squid until it was time for them to head down to the Quidditch pitch to get ready for the match.

Once the team was assembled in the locker room and all of them had changed into their Quidditch gear and robes, Ron began the speech, “Okay, team, this is the last match for several of us.” The four seventh year boys all exchanged glances and nodded grinning at each other. Ron continued, “So, we will not be the ones that let the Quidditch Cup slip away. It’s time for us to go out there and show them what we can do. Let’s take that Cup again.” The team cheered and ran to the doors to await Owen to announce them.

“This is Owen Cauldwell. I am your announcer for the Quidditch Final today. This match will be between Gryffindor and the Ravenclaw. Gryffindor is the reigning Quidditch Cup Champions, and Ravenclaw seeks to dethrone them here today. Let us see what happens. Now, onto the teams.” He announced the Ravenclaw team, and then turned to the Gryffindor team. “Gryffindors, I give you your Chasers! Ginny Weasley! Natalie McDonald! Colin Creevey! You Beaters! Dean Thomas! Seamus Finnigan! You Seeker and former Captain! Harry Potter! And finally, you Keeper and Captain, Ron Weasley!” The Gryffindors cheered loudly as the entire team took a flight around the stands.

They landed and Madam Hooch walked out into the center ring with the crate of balls, and said, “Captains, shake hands.”

Ron and Michael Corner shook hands. Then, the two teams took to the air as Madam Hooch released the Bludgers and the Golden Snitch. The Snitch twittered teasingly in front of each Seeker’s face before flying off into the clear blue sky. Madam Hooch threw the Quaffle up into the air and the match began. Natalie snatched the Quaffle first and went soaring towards the Ravenclaw goal posts. The Ravenclaw Chasers swarmed her, and she reverse passed to Ginny. The Keeper veered out to head Ginny off and she lobbed the Quaffle over her shoulder to Colin, who took the shot at the unprotected center ring for Gryffindor’s first goal. Owen Cauldwell cried out, “Ten-zero to Gryffindor. Nice teamwork by the Gryffindor Chasers.”

The match continued at a fast and furious pace for over an hour, until Harry caught sight of the Ravenclaw Seeker diving for the Snitch. Harry poured on a burst of speed and went flying towards the Snitch. The two Seekers went neck and neck till the Snitch shifted direction, and the Ravenclaw Seeker overshot the Snitch with his hand stretched out. Instead of trying to veer with the Snitch, Harry just dove sideways off his broom and caught the Snitch as he was falling towards the ground. Harry cast a Cushioning Charm on the ground and landed safely as the stands erupted into cheering as Owen Cauldwell proclaimed, “Gryffindor wins the Quidditch Cup. 190-20. Gryffindor wins.”

The celebration in Gryffindor Tower that night lasted so long that McGonagall was forced to come in three times to get the excited Gryffindors to go to bed. The Weasley twins would have been proud of such a display.

27. N.E.W.T.'s

The remaining time in the school year seemed to slip away, and soon enough it was time for N.E.W.T.'s. The last few days were hectic around Gryffindor Tower as most of the seventh and fifth years began to buckle under the strain of studying for their exams. The panel of testers showed up at Hogwarts the night before the tests were to begin. The group of students were sitting around in Gryffindor Tower, studying furiously, even Ron. Harry seemed to be the only student not in state of panic over his N.E.W.T.'s. He sat in a chair reading a book about Quidditch while everyone studied around him. Hermione finally asked, "Harry, aren't you going to study?"

Harry looked up in surprise, "Why?"

Hermione exploded, "What do you mean why? We have N.E.W.T.'s beginning tomorrow."

Harry nodded, "I know. I've already taken them, though. Its not like there is going to be anything to surprise me."

Ron looked up from his book, "When did you take them?"

Harry grinned, "In Tom's memory. He got O's on every one of his N.E.W.T.'s, and my magical knowledge extends far beyond anything he would have thought was capable at that time. I think that I should be able to handle a few simple tests."

Neville said ruefully, "I wish that I could be as calm about as you."

Harry shrugged, "When you've nearly died as many times as I have, a little test doesn't seem all that bad."

Neville nodded, "I guess not. That's a good way to look at things."

Ron asked, "Which exam do you have first, Harry?"

Harry replied, "Same as Hermione. We both have Potions in the morning."

Ron shivered, "Ugh, Potions. I would rather die than have to ever take another Potions test."

Harry laughed, "I'm sure you will find some way to avoid ever having to take another one."

The group of students continued studying well into the night, but Harry merely went down to the Quidditch pitch to ride his broom before bed. The next morning, all of the students reported to their assigned rooms to take their examinations. Professor Tofty was giving the Potions N.E.W.T. He handed the test papers out to the five students that were taking the Potions N.E.W.T. Harry glanced over the questions on the examination. They all seem fairly straight forward and easy to him, but upon glancing around the room, he noticed even Hermione's brow wrinkled in concentration as she attempted to answer the questions. Harry picked up his quill and began answering the first question about the time intervals for stewing Veritaserum. When Professor Tofty called time for the end of the examination for the morning, Hermione was still writing furiously. Harry had been finished for at least fifteen minutes. The two of them got up to walk out of the room together, and Hermione asked, "How do you think you did?"

Harry shrugged, "It seemed pretty simple. I'm sure I did fine."

Hermione sniffed, "The test was quite difficult. I didn't even get to finish the last question."

Harry chuckled, "Hermione, you always complain about how you think you did, and you always do just fine. Why don't you just relax for a change?"

Hemrione stopped in surprise, and then replied, "I don't know if I know how to relax when it comes to tests."

Harry shot back over his shoulder as he continued walking, "You need to learn. It would do you a lot of good."

Hermione stood still for a few moments before hurrying to catch up with Harry as he headed for the Great Hall to eat lunch.

That afternoon, they returned to the same room to take the practical portion of the N.E.W.T. Potions exam. Professor took his place at the front of the room as each student sat beside a cauldron. He announced, "For your Potions N.E.W.T., you will each be brewing a concentration of Skele-Gro. This is one of the most complex potions in the healing arts. Your ingredients are in your kits, and the cupboard against the wall. You may begin."

Everyone began unpacking ingredients from their kits, while Harry waved a hand at the cupboard and the proper ingredients soared over to his table, and he set to work. The work was long and hard, but at the end of the class period, it seemed that everyone had done a moderately good job of preparing their potions. Professor Tofty dismissed them, and they left to go to dinner.

Ron looked at Harry and Hermione as they sat down to the table, "So, how was it?"

Harry shrugged, "It was alright."

Hermione sighed, "I wish I was as confident as he was. We had to brew Skele-Gro."

Ron laughed, "That stuff Harry had to drink after that idiot Lockhart vanished his bones?"

Harry nodded sourly as the memory surfaced in his mind, "Thanks for reminding me, Ron. That stuff tasted horrible"

Neville chuckled, "Better you than us."

Harry laughed with them, "I suppose you're right."

Ginny patted Harry on the arm, "At least if something like that happens again, you have me to pamper you."

Harry snorted, "If something like that happens again, I will fix it myself. I don't intend to ever drink that disgusting concoction again."

Neville asked, "So, what is your next exam?"

Harry replied, "Herbology on Wednesday. Then, Defense Against the Dark Arts is on Friday. We all have Charms on next Tuesday, and then I have Transfiguration next Friday."

Ron said, "At least you have tomorrow off. Neville and I have to take Care of Magical Creatures."

Ginny asked, "What about you, Hermione?"

Hermione smiled, "I'm off tomorrow and Wednesday, but I have Arithmancy on Thursday. Then, my schedule is the same as Harry's."

The next morning Ron and Neville went down to Hagrid's hut to take their Care of Magical creatures N.E.W.T., while the rest of them stayed in the common room to study for their next tests. Harry and Ginny spent some time helping Hermione with her Arithmancy, and then went out to the Quidditch pitch to fly together.

Harry went with Ron and Neville to the greenhouses on Wednesday for their Herbology N.E.W.T. For the practical portion of this test, they were required to care for several different dangerous plants without getting hurt. Ron seemed to be having trouble, but Harry was doing a good job working with his plants. Neville, on the other hand was performing his work perfectly and with such ease that he appeared to be exerting no effort whatsoever.

That afternoon after exams were over, the group of friends met in the common room. Hermione looked up from her book when Ron, Harry, and Neville walked through the portrait hole, "How was the test?"

Harry shrugged as he dropped down onto the couch beside Ginny, "It was fine."

Ron flopped down onto the floor, "It was horrible. I thought some of those plants were going to try to eat me."

Neville laughed, "It wasn't that bad, Ron. The test was actually quite easy."

Ron groaned, "I'm going to take a walk. I'm tired of being surrounded by smart people." He got up and walked back out the portrait hole.

Hermione sighed, "I guess we are a little hard on him."

Harry nodded, "I know, but he'll be better for it. He just needs to realize that he has his own gifts, and that he shouldn't try to compete with us so much."

Ginny snuggled closer to Harry on the couch, "That's a problem for Ron. He has been competing with the image of what he should be his entire life. He thinks that everyone expects him to live up to what our brothers have accomplished."

Harry chuckled, "That's just it. He has. He just doesn't see it."

Hermione got up from her chair, "I'm going to go after him."

Neville nodded, "You do that. He probably needs a good snog."

Hermione blushed slightly as she walked out the portrait hole. Ginny leaned over and blew in Harry's ear, "Speaking of a good snog."

Harry grinned and pulled her into his lap before pressing his lips to hers in a fiery kiss.

Harry, Neville, and Ron spent the next day resting and studying, while Hermione took her Arithmancy test. After that, all of them prepared for their Defense Against the Dark Arts N.E.W.T. On Friday morning, they assembled in class to take the written portion of the test. The questions were pretty straightforward. They included common ways to dispel and defend against different curses and hexes. There were also several essay questions on what to do in certain defensive situations. The Gryffindors got together at lunch to discuss the test. Ron nodded, "I actually enjoyed that test. It wasn't that bad."

"We've had a good teacher the last two years." said Harry.

Ginny smiled, "Two of them, actually."

Harry smiled back at her, "Why thank you, Lady Gryffindor. I appreciate the vote of confidence."

Ron made a gagging sound, "Don't make me sick."

Neville just chuckled at their antics, "I just can't wait for this afternoon. I'm dying to see what the Aurors have planned for us."

Harry shrugged, "I'm sure we will find out shortly."

Once everyone was finished with lunch, they proceeded to the Dueling Chamber. When they walked in, they discovered that the room had been magically expanded and altered. Dawlish was standing in front of an opening. "We have constructed an obstacle course for your Defense Against the Dark Arts N.E.W.T. You will have ten minutes to run through the course. You will be judge on how many curses and physical traps that you are hit with. Also, the time you take to complete the course will affect your score. We will be sending you in one at a time. Now, let's get started."

Hermione was the first of the group to go through the course. She did fairly well, but she was hit by several minor hexes, and a couple of physical traps. She exited the course with a black eye. Ron pointed to her, "Ouch! That look like it hurt."

Hermione sighed, "It wasn't enjoyable."

At about that moment, Neville grinned, "Well, its my turn now. See you on the other side."

Harry nodded to him as he darted into the course. Neville immediately cast a complete bubble shield around him, and just concentrated on dodging the physical impediments in the course. Harry overheard one of the Aurors whistle, "I didn't think anyone could maintain a bubble shield that long."

Another one said, "After what I saw that one do in the Dueling Tournament, nothing would surprise me."

Ron leaned over and whispered to Harry, "I think they are impressed by your students."

Harry laughed, "I think so too."

A few minutes later, Neville emerged from the obstacle course completely unscathed. He took a bow as people began applauding him for his performance. Neville looked to Harry, "I guess that you will have to beat my time."

Harry shrugged, "We'll see." Then, he took off into the obstacle course to begin his run through it. Harry ran through the course at a breakneck speed, and seemingly dodged all the spells and traps with ease. Harry came out the other end and walked nonchalantly back over to his friends as if he had done nothing to cause any amount of surprise from the people surrounding him.

Dawlish slapped Harry on the back, "Well, it comes as no surprise to me that you have set the course record. No one has ever completed it that quickly."

Harry smiled, "I try. Ron, I believe you're up, and then we can get out of here for the day."

Ron drew his wand and advanced towards the entrance to the obstacle course. He turned around once before entering and said, "Wish me luck." Then, he plunged through the entrance and began his quest to complete the obstacle course. Ron did remarkably well, and managed to avoid all of the physical traps. He was hit by a few curses, but held up quite well. He exited the course, and smiled as Hermione gave him a hug.

Harry and Neville both clapped him on the back and said, "Good job, mate."

Ron sighed, "Let's get out of here."

The troop of Gryffindors exited the Dueling Chamber and headed back to the common room to rid themselves of school supplies for the weekend. The Gryffindors and Luna took a bit of a break over the weekend, but it was back to the grindstone on Monday as Neville went in for his Ancient Runes N.E.W.T., while the others began preparing for the Charms exam.

On Tuesday morning, they all grouped together to head in for the written portion of the exam. The vast majority of the test covered the Concealment and Disguise Charms, along with essay questions on the various wards and their uses. Harry had little trouble with the test, and neither did any of his friends. That afternoon, Griselda Marchbanks stood before them with several Aurors. She announced, "We will be testing your ability to conceal yourselves at first. The Aurors will be attempting to find each of you in the room that we have set up next door to this one. You will have a three minute head start to hid yourself. Then, they will pursue. The longer you manage to elude them, and remain concealed the better your score will be. Now, let's begin." She began calling out names for people to line up to take the test.

Yet again, Hermione was the first to go in. After the Aurors went in after her, there was a period of about four minutes before she emerged with Dawlish patting her on the back encouragingly. Harry smiled at her, "Good job, Hermione. Four minutes isn't bad at all."

Hermione shrugged, "It isn't great either. Terry Boot managed to elude them for nearly ten minutes."

Ron said sympathetically, "Terry wants to be a Charm Breaker though. He has to be really good at this kind of thing. I bet he won't come anywhere near your marks on the written test."

Hermione smiled and blushed at the compliment. After a few more minutes of conversation, Neville was called in to begin. The Aurors followed a few minutes later. When Neville's time was approaching twelve minutes, the Aurors finally emerged with a grinning Neville in tow. Ron crowed, "Dang, Neville, that was brilliant. Nobody has lasted that long yet."

Neville shrugged, "It was a nice little game. It would have been more fun if you could fight back though."

One of the Aurors nearby heard the comment and replied, "I don't think there are very many of us that would dare cross wands with you, Longbottom. We all know what its like to duel Frank, and if anything, you're better than he ever was."

Neville beamed at the praise, and the comparison to his father. The four Gryffindors continued to chat until it was Harry's turn to enter the room. He looked up at the ceiling after he had entered the room, and waved his hand to cast a Sticking Charm on part of it. Then, he levitated himself up to the ceiling to place his back to the sticky part of the ceiling and hang suspended from it. Then, he vanished from sight and waited for the Aurors to come in. After they did so, he watched in amusement as they searched the cavernous chamber for him. They were quick and efficient, that was clear. However, it occurred to none of them to check the ceiling. Although, even if they had they would not have been able to penetrate his veil of invisibility. After waiting for several minutes, he Apparated to Dumbledore's office.

Dumbledore glanced up from where he was working on papers, and asked, "Aren't you supposed to be taking a Charms test at the moment?"

Harry nodded, "Actually I'm in the middle of my test at this moment. I just thought that I would pop up here and ask you how long I should let them search for me before revealing myself."

Dumbledore chuckled and then asked, "How long have they been searching for you?"

Harry shrugged, "I think about ten minutes."

"I would say about another ten minutes and then show yourself. No point in letting it go on all day." replied Dumbledore.

Harry nodded, "I suppose. Well, I guess I'll return to my perch."

As he started to leave, Dumbledore echoed, "Perch?"

Harry nodded, "I stuck myself to the ceiling."

The last thing Harry heard as he Apparated back to the room, was a roaring boom of laughter from Dumbledore and the portraits of the previous Headmasters that would have done even Hagrid proud.

Harry returned to the room and floated down to the ground. Being completely invisible, he had little trouble evading the Aurors for another ten minutes. Once this amount of time was up, Harry walked to the door, and made himself visible. Then, he waited for one of the Aurors to notice him. Finally, Adams saw him and yelled, "I've got him."

Harry chuckled to himself as he turned and walked out the door. All of the other students stood there staring at him in awe. Ron said, "Wow. You were in there for over twenty minutes, Harry."

Griselda Marchbanks said happily, "And unless I am much mistaken, the only reason he was found was because he got bored with waiting. I haven't seen such a display since Dumbledore was a student. Merlin's descendants always make things interesting."

Harry replied, "I'm sure we do. Now, guys, let's get out of here."

All of them went back up to the common room to meet Luna and Ginny. Then, they went to dinner and spent the rest of the evening playing.

Harry, and Hermione had their final N.E.W.T. in Transfiguration on Friday. The written exam covered a great deal on Conjuring and Animagus transformations. That afternoon, they went in to find Professor Tofty awaiting them. He said, "By far the most difficult part of Transfiguration is Conjuring. Each of you will be asked to conjure various objects and then you will be finished with your N.E.W.T.'s. Now, I'm sure you are familiar with how we will be conducting this. I will call out your names and you will form a line accordingly." The Transfiguration students lined up to await their practical exam. Hermione went up to the table first, and was asked to conjure a tea set, and a plush armchair.

After several more people went, it was finally Harry's turn to take his place before Professor Tofty. Professor Tofty smiled, "Well, Mr. Potter, are you prepared?"

Harry nodded, "Of course. This should be a snap."

Professor Tofty shook his head, "That's not what I meant. Are you prepared to face the Dark Lord?"

Harry eyed him warily, "What do you know about that?"

Tofty smiled, "I was once an Unspeakable at the Ministry, Mr. Potter. I've known about the Prophecy for years. I have watched you just as Dumbledore has over the years. If you are ready, I know you will defeat Tom."

Harry grinned, "Thanks for the vote of confidence. I'm sure that we will find out if that confidence is justified soon enough."

Tofty nodded, "I'm sure we will. Now, to finish your exam. If you would conjure a curio cabinet, and a bed off to the side here."

Harry snapped his fingers and both objects appeared. Tofty clapped, "Excellent, Mr. Potter, you may go now."

Harry and Hermione went back to the common room to meet up with the others. Harry made a motion with his hand for Ron and Neville to follow him, and they headed up to the Head Boy's room together.

Ginny mused aloud, "I wonder what those two are up to?"

Luna giggled, "I bet I know."

Hermione asked, "What?"

Luna smiled, "Well, N.E.W.T.'s are over. I believe that Harry has a question to ask you, Ginny."

Ginny smiled to herself, "Yes, he does. I'm just curious about how he is going to do it."

Hermione laughed, "So are the rest of us."

The three boys went into Harry's room. Harry pulled out a package and handed it to Neville, "This is the fireworks package I had the twins put together for me. I need the two of you to get it on the roof of the Astronomy Tower before dinner is over. I'm going to take Ginny up there to propose as soon as we are through eating."

Ron asked, "Do I need to give you the big brother lecture?"

Harry shook his head, "I don't think so. I'm going to marry her. It's time for me to be her protector. Not that she needs one. I think she takes care of herself just fine."

Ron and Neville both slapped Harry on the back. Neville said, "Don't worry, mate. We will make sure the fireworks are waiting for you."

Harry nodded, "Thanks, guys." The two boys carried the fireworks down the stairs, while Harry turned to his chest of drawers and pulled the ring box out and put it in his pocket. He walked downstairs to find the three girls staring at him, "What?"

Hermione said, "Neville and Ron just darted out the portrait hole holding something. What are they up to?"

Harry shrugged, "I have no idea." Then, he turned to Ginny, "Are you ready for dinner?"

She replied, "Of course. Let's go."

Luna and Hermione followed the couple down to the Great Hall where they were met by Ron and Neville. After dinner, Harry steered Ginny towards the Astronomy Tower. She asked playfully, "So, where are you taking me, Lord Gryffindor?"

Harry merely smiled mysteriously and led the way up the stairs to the top of the Astronomy Tower. He said as they stepped out under the tapestry of stars, "I've got a little surprise for you." He flicked his hand and the Weasley Whiz Bangs began exploding into the air. Harry took a step back as Ginny gasped at the breathtaking display of red and gold that was taking shape in the sky. He quietly opened the box and held it in his hand. Students from inside the castle started coming outside to see the display. Finally, the last rocket went up into the air and exploded forming the words, "Will you marry me, Virginia Molly Weasley?"

Ginny spun around to face Harry , and her eyes immediately zeroed in on the ring. Then, her eyes roved up to meet Harry's eyes, "Harry James Potter, you better put that ring on my finger right now."

Harry shook his head slightly, "You have to answer the question first."

Ginny giggled, "Yes, Lord Gryffindor, I will marry you."

Harry slid the ring onto Ginny's finger, and then drew her into a kiss. Ginny reached down to Harry's belt and began to undo it. Harry slid around to begin kissing her neck, while Ginny breathed into his ear, "I want you." At that moment, a clear clarion trumpet blast split the air, and Harry staggered back from Ginny as pain flared in his scar. He turned to Ginny, "Go to Dumbledore. Voldemort is here."

28. Voldemort's Assault

Harry took a running leap off the building and plummeted towards the ground as Ginny raced down the stairs transforming as she went. Harry said, "Sonorus." Then he yelled, "All students, get back in the castle. Voldemort has arrived." The students rushed for the doors and Harry flicked his hand and enlarged the opening to accommodate them. He landed safely and Neville, Luna, Ron, and Hermione rushed over to him.

Neville asked immediately, "What are your orders?"

Harry spoke quickly, "Luna, you have the best healing spells. Go to help Madam Pomfrey. She will need you. Hermione, your lynx form is small and quick. I want you on messenger status. Be careful, though, its going to get rough out here. If you see Death Eaters, judge what is more important. Defeating them or delivering your message. Ron, Neville, grab hold. We're going to Dumbledore's office."

Neville and Ron each placed a hand on Harry's shoulders and they popped directly into Dumbledore's office. Ginny was already there. Albus looked over to Harry, "How bad is it?"

Harry shrugged, "I don't know yet. Let's go to the Astronomy Tower and find out." Harry held out his arm and they all latched on. Harry Apparated all five of them to the top of the tower. Ginny gasped as she saw the army of dark creatures arrayed before them. The giants were standing just outside the forest. There was a teeming of at least one thousand Dementors. There were hundreds of trolls, rogue goblins, vampires, and Acromantulas. There was an array of at least two hundred Death Eaters with a hovering throne above the vast army. In this throne sat the newly transformed Lord Voldemort.

Ron asked in awe, "How do we beat this many?"

Harry replied grimly, "The same way you kill anything huge. You cut off its head."

Voldemort's voice rang out across the open area between the castle and the forest, "Potter, I will give you one chance to surrender yourself to me."

Harry cast another Amplification Charm on himself, "Voldemort, I would never surrender to you. So, go to hell!"

Voldemort replied, "Then, you have sentenced everyone in this castle to death."

Harry removed the Amplification Charm from himself, and then said, "Albus, I need you to rally the teachers and some of the Dueling Club members to man the windows and repel the attackers. The rest of you go with him. Ron, you bear form will probably wreak havoc those trolls. Albus, Luna is with Madam Pomfrey. Hermione is standing by to deliver messages. Good luck, everyone."

Ginny asked, "What are you going to do, Harry?"

He replied grimly, "I'm going to take the Dementors out of the equation, and then I'm going to make Tom Riddle and his Death Eaters regret the day I was born. Now, go. We have little time." Once the rest of them had filed down the stairs and left Harry on the top of the tower by himself, he turned back to the massive army that lay before him. As they began to move down the hill towards the castle, Harry cast his Greater Patronus Charm. "Expectus Patroni Aurum Solidid Obliterate!" A massive burst of light flared out, and dozens of solid gold stags burst into being and charged directly into the group of Dementors. They began tearing them to pieces quite easily, and the Dementors backed away while the rest of the dark creatures advanced. Harry Apparated downstairs to say, "I need everyone that can cast an Explosion Hex on the roof. We're going to give them a thing or two to think about. The group of Aurors that was stationed at Hogwarts came over to him, and so did a few seventh years including Neville. Harry shook his head, "Neville, I need you with me. The rest of you take this Portkey to the roof. Tonks, you mark off the shots. Good luck."

Tonks nodded as she took the Portkey he handed her, "You can count on us, Harry."

Harry nodded, "I know." The group disappeared, and Harry said, "That should keep the Giants from storming the castle anyway. They don't like magical explosions."

Hermione came running up to him in her lynx form and transformed back, "Professor Dumbledore says that there is a group of Acromantulas trying to scale the rear of the castle."

Harry slapped Neville on the back, "Take a few Dueling Club members and handle it. I'm going to get Ron and few others working on the trolls. Then, maybe I can see about killing Tom. Get moving."

Neville responded, "Yes, sir." He ran over to the group of fifth, sixth, and seventh years that were awaiting instructions. He pointed at several of them, "Come with me. We've got a big spider problem to deal with. Move." The students that Neville pointed out followed him toward the back of the castle to deal with the Acromantulas.

Harry turned to Ron as he walked up to him, "Pick a contingent to back you up with Stunning Spells, and head out after the trolls and goblins. Remember it takes at least three stunners to take down a troll, so group your shots. They are all on the left flank. I'm going to head out and go head to head with some of these damn Death Eaters, until I make my way to Voldemort. I know he is going to hide while the battle progresses. He wants me to waste my energy, so that I will be weaker when I face him."

Ron shrugged, "I suppose. Just be careful, Harry. You just proposed to my sister. You better live long enough to actually marry her."

Harry grinned, "I intend to."

Ron grabbed a few of the students and a couple more Aurors that had shown up and headed towards the far end of Hogwarts where the Trolls could be heard demolishing the greenhouses.

Neville's forces reached the back wall first, and stood in a line on the battlements to look down on the Acromantulas as they were climbing the wall. Neville shouted, "Stunners on three. One, two, three!"

A dozen voiced rang out, "Stupefy!" Six of the Acromantulas fell from the wall. Neville followed this by casting a Sheet of Flame Spell, which dazzled the Acromantulas and caused several more of them to fall from the wall. Several more Stunners later, there was a pile of dazed and stunned Acromantulas at the base of the castle. Neville shouted, "Explo-dra!" The Explosion Hex ripped through the mass of Acromantulas and sent pieces of them spinning through the air. Neville spoke to his recruits, "I'm going back to the front line. Make sure they don't attempt another assault from here."

One of the sixth years snapped off a salute, "Yes, sir. You can count on us."

Neville grinned, "I know I can." Then, he hurried away.

Ron's group was the next to come into contact with the enemy. They exited the castle through one of the secret corridors to come up behind the Trolls as they rampaged through what remained of the greenhouses. Ron looked back over his shoulder, "Cover me with Stunning Spells. Just be careful not to hit me with them. I'm going to give these guys a reason to run." Ron transformed into a bear, and quickly mauled the first Troll he came upon. His backup forces began hurling timed Stunners at the other Trolls as they turned to face this attack. Several more Trolls fell to combined Stunning Spells, while several more fell prey to Ron's teeth and paws. The Trolls finally began to break ranks and flee before the assault, but before they did so, two of the Trolls smashed their clubs into either side of Ron's ribs. They fled and Ron transformed back into his human form. He grimaced in pain, "I think several of my ribs are broken. Retreat back into the castle." Then, he lost consciousness.

Hannah Abbott waved her wand at him, "Mobilicorpus." Then, she turned to the rest of the students. "You heard him. Get back inside." The group of students retreated back into the castle, as a group of rogue goblins came around the castle to finish what the Trolls had begun.

Meanwhile, Harry had gazed out the window to see how the battle was progressing. The Explosion Hexes from the top of the castle were keeping most of the Giants and Death Eaters at bay, but several of them were making their way down to the Entrance Hall doors. Harry had a contingent of students along with himself and Dumbledore standing prepared to meet this assault. There was a slight noise and a group of Aurors and Order of the Phoenix members appeared in the hall, led by Mad-Eye Moody. The twins were there with a bag full of Weasley Bombs. Harry grinned, "Distribute those. We are about to take the battle outside to Voldemort's forces."

Neville came hurrying up to them, “There are several students holding the back wall. The Acromantulas from that end were beaten.”

Harry nodded, “Excellent news.” A few moments later, Hannah Abbott came running around the corner with Ron in tow. Harry asked, “What happened?”

Hannah sighed, “The Trolls got him. He’s still alive, but he’s hurt badly.”

Harry replied, “Take him to the hospital wing. Were the Trolls beaten?”

Hannah nodded, “Yes, but there are goblins attacking that flank now.”

Harry turned to Moody, “Alastor, take several Aurors, and deal with the goblins.”

Moody flashed a feral smile, “It would be my pleasure. Good luck.”

Hermione came running up to Harry at that moment, “What do you want me to do, Harry?”

Harry said, “The right flank of the castle is not being attacked right now. I want you to sneak out, and go into the Forbidden Forest. You must alert the centaurs that we need aid immediately.”

Hermione had transformed back into her lynx form and took off running before Harry could even finish his sentence. Less than a minute later, the front doors of the castle blew off and giants came pouring in, followed by a group of Death Eaters. Harry waved his arms around, “I command the winds to obey me. Swirl and blow. Hurricanos!” The windstorm swirled around and swept the attacking forces back out of the castle. It also succeeded in wiping out most of the front archway. Harry called over his shoulder, “Alright, people, let’s take this battle to them.”

The remaining Aurors and students in the hall followed Harry and Dumbledore out of the castle. Harry raised his arm, “Accio Sword of Gryffindor.” The sword flew out one of the windows of the castle to land smoothly in Harry’s right hand. He raised it above his head and cried out, “Charge.” Several of the student hurled Weasley bombs at the creatures of the dark. This sent confusion into the ranks. Harry waded right into the fray, and began stabbing and cursing Death Eaters, Giants, Trolls, goblins, and Acromantulas with a vengeance. The rest of his forces followed in his wake and cleaned up the mess he left behind.

A few moments later, a group of goblins came fleeing around the left flank of the castle pursued by a group of Aurors. Explosion Hexes continued to rain down on the attackers from the top of the castle, until Harry heard several roars that indicated the arrival of dragons. Harry looked up to see four Hungarian Horntails flying towards the top of the castle. Harry turned to Dumbledore, “Albus, I have to take the dragons out. Keep them alive.” Harry then rose into the air.

At the same time, Tonks and Ginny looked up to see the Hungarian Horntails bearing down on them from above. Tonks shouted, “Take cover!” All of the group on the roof dove for cover, but it was too little too late for several of them. The Horntails sent cones of fire over the top of the roof killing several of the people stationed up there.

Ginny and Tonks managed to avoid being burned too badly, and looked up again to see Harry fly over and head after the dragons. Tonks looked over at Ginny in amazement, “He can fly?”

Ginny shrugged, “I guess so.”

Harry dropped down onto the back of one of the Horntails, and placed his hands at the base of its neck. He muttered for several moments and acid began to eat its way through the dragon’s hide, and it plummeted to the ground to crash lifeless into the edge of the forest. The other three Horntails began circling around Harry as he floated in the air.

Meanwhile, Hermione had raced into the forest, and finally she located Ronan. She popped back into her human form, and said quickly, “Voldemort is attacking the castle, Ronan. Harry said that we desperately need the centaurs help.”

Ronan nodded, “Tell him that he shall have it. Magorian will hear of this immediately.”

Hermione smiled, "Thank goodness. The situation is bad." The two of them hurried deeper into the forest.

Back at the castle, Harry had cast an Amplification Charm on himself, "Voldemort! Its time for you to face me. I've taken the best you can throw at me. Its your turn."

The dragons stopped circling Harry and flew away. A flash of light streaked across the area and then, Voldemort was floating face to face with Harry. Everyone on the ground stopped fighting for one moment to look up and see the confrontation between the two begin. Then, they resumed the battle that raged below the two central figures in the entire confrontation. Ginny looked over at Tonks, "We need to get down to the ground and help. We can't do anything for Harry right now, but wish him luck."

Tonks nodded, "Good luck, Harry." Then, the two witches headed down to the ground level of the castle to join in the battle.

Once the two witches reached the ground level and joined the battle they were ambushed by a force of five Death Eaters. Tonks went down to a Cutting Curse and left Ginny to fight them alone. She defeated three of them quite handily before they managed to disarm her. The two of them stood over her triumphantly, and one of them said, "Crucio." Before the curse could hit her, however, another figure jumped in the way of the curse. Ginny rolled sideways to retrieve her wand and stunned both of the Death Eaters before bending over the black robed figure lying on the ground. It was none other than Peter Pettigrew.

Ginny's eyes hardened for a moment, then softened at the obvious pain that the small man was in. It also dawned on her that he had just saved her life. Peter looked up at her and said, "Tell Harry that I consider my debt to him paid. Now, I will pay my debt to his parents and Sirius." Then, Peter took out a knife and stabbed himself in the throat.

Ginny sighed, "A fool to the end."

Voldemort laughed in Harry's face, "This meeting will be much different than our last."

Harry grinned confidently, "You're right. This time when I kill you, you will stay dead."

Voldemort snarled, "We will see, Potter. We will see. I am the greater now." Then, he attacked with a sword that appeared from nowhere in his hand. Harry countered with the Sword of Gryffindor and the fight began in earnest as the two of them began dueling as if they were on the ground. They slowly sank down to the ground as the duel progressed. After fighting for several minutes, Voldemort paused in his assault to gaze around at the battle. Harry did the same, but where Voldemort smiled, Harry cringed. The dark forces were forcing the defenders of Hogwarts into a smaller and smaller area. Voldemort looked over at Harry, "So, you see, Potter, this is the end. Hogwarts is fallen, and soon so will you."

At the same time, Neville and Dumbledore were trying to reorganize the defenders for a counter attack, but it was doing them little good as they were being completely overrun by overwhelming odds. Neville stabbed his sword into one Death Eater, and watched him fall as Dumbledore stunned another. The two of them looked at each other and then around at the surrounding battle. Neville asked, "So what now, Headmaster?"

Dumbledore shook his head, "I wish I knew."

Suddenly, a trumpet blast pierced the air, and a hail of arrows came flying from the Forbidden Forest to land among the ranks of giants. A line of centaurs came charging out of the forest to enter the fray. Neville grinned at Dumbledore, "I guess that just answered our question. Now, let's take them." Neville ran forward and began slaughtering dark creatures as fast as he possibly could.

Harry grinned as the centaurs charged into view, "It seems that the forces of light haven't been overthrown yet, Tom. Now, it is time for us to finish this."

Voldemort raised his sword and said, "So it is." Then, he attacked and the duel began to rage again. After some time it became apparent that Hogwarts would not fall. The dark creatures were beginning to retreat, and the Death Eaters had been decimated almost completely. Another contingent of Aurors had arrived from the Ministry, and everything became still as the remaining combatants stopped to watch the duel between Harry and Voldemort reach its completion.

Harry taunted Voldemort as the two struggled to overcome one another, "Your forces are beaten, Tom. It is time for you to give it up. You can never defeat the light."

Voldemort spat out savagely, "Watch me." Then, he kicked out, and knocked Harry from his feet. Harry scrambled back to a standing position, but it was too little too late. Voldemort stabbed his sword directly into Harry's left side and pain flared in him. Harry fell to the ground, and Voldemort cackled as he raised his wand, "It is finished. I am the victor."

Then, Neville slammed into Voldemort from behind, knocking him to the ground. Voldemort rolled back to his feet, and conjured another sword. Neville grinned, "You have to get through me if you want to finish Harry, Tom. Remember, there were two boys born on that prophetic night."

Voldemort snarled, "Boy, I will make you regret challenging me."

Neville laughed, "We will see about that."

Meanwhile Aurellia and Fawkes had landed beside Harry and began to drop tears onto the wound as Harry pulled the sword from his body. Once the healing was complete, he stood up to note that the duel between Neville and Voldemort was not going well. Harry retrieved his sword and stepped forward to block the killing blow that Voldemort had aimed at Neville.

Voldemort flicked his eyes sideways to see that Harry was fine. In the blink of an eye, Neville plunged his sword into Voldemort's abdomen. Harry smiled, "As you see, Voldemort, you can never defeat the light, because they are always willing to sacrifice themselves for one another." Harry reversed Voldemort's sword around, and thrust it into the ground, before plunging his own blade into Voldemort's chest.

Voldemort staggered back and raised his wand to attempt to cast a spell, but Harry waved his hand and sent Voldemort flying with an Explosion Hex. Then, he summoned Voldemort's wand and snapped it. Harry stepped forward to stand before Voldemort's fallen body. "Well, my old enemy, it has been almost seventeen years since we first met. As the Prophecy dictates, one of us must die at the hands of the other. Goodbye, Tom." Harry raised both hands above his head and then cried out, "Mortis Arcanum Bindus Soulus Externalis." A rush of energy poured from Harry's hands and slammed into Voldemort's body. Then, there was a massive flash of light, and Voldemort's body vanished before Harry slumped to the ground unconscious.

29. War's End

Ginny and several others rushed over to Harry as he fell to the ground. Ginny bent down over him as Dumbledore stepped up beside her. Dumbledore asked, "Is he alive?"

Ginny nodded as she felt for a pulse, "Yes, but his pulse is very weak. We have to get him to St. Mungos."

Dumbledore nodded as he tapped a rock and said, "Portus. Here take this and get Harry to St. Mungos. Warn them that they are going to have a lot of wounded shortly. We will transport the rest."

Ginny replied, "I will." Then, she took the Portkey and her and Harry disappeared. They reappeared in the waiting room of St. Mungos Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries. One of the Healers asked immediately, "What is wrong?"

Ginny said, "This is Harry Potter. He fell like this after he killed Voldemort. He needs help, and there will be a lot more wounded on the way. The battle was fierce."

Everyone in the room flinched at the sound of the Dark Lord's name until one wizard in the waiting room had the sense to ask, "Did you just say that Harry Potter killed He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named?"

Ginny affirmed impatiently, "Yes, Voldemort is dead. Now, will someone please help me?"

The Healers sprang into action as the wizard that asked the question sprang into the air, "Praise be to Harry Potter. The Dark Lord is dead." Then, he raced out of the hospital and Apparated directly into the Leaky Cauldron. Once he arrived, he shouted, "You Know Who is dead. Harry Potter has killed him."

Several of the occupants turned to look at him curiously. One of them asked, "What?"

The wizard replied, "Harry Potter has triumphed over the Dark Lord. We have won."

Another witch asked, "Are you serious?"

The wizard nodded, "I was waiting at St. Mungos when they brought him in with the news. Praise be to Harry Potter."

Tom, the innkeeper asked, "Why were they bringing Mr. Potter to St. Mungos?"

The wizard responded gravely, "The slip of a girl that brought him in said that after he vanquished the Dark Lord that he fell down straightaway. He must have been wounded greatly."

A babble of voices broke out at this news, and suddenly people were Apparating all over the country to spread the news. This quandary was nothing compared to the outright catastrophe that was occurring at St. Mungos at the moment. The wounded among the students and adults during the battle at Hogwarts mounted over a hundred with at least thirty dead. The Healers worked for almost twenty four hours before everything was sorted out, and everyone had received treatment and been sent home, or had been admitted for longer term care.

Harry had a room to himself, where Ginny sat by his side without leaving for fear that he might awake while she was gone. In the very late hours of the next night following the battle, Algwyn Filch and Albus Dumbledore walked into the room. Algwyn examined him carefully and then sighed, "I don't understand it. There is absolutely nothing wrong with him, but he still remains unconscious."

Dumbledore shrugged, "I think that he exhausted every bit of magical energy that he had within himself to destroy Voldemort. I'm sure that he will awake when he is ready. In the meantime, I think that it would be better to have him taken to Hogwarts. He will be much safer there than he would be here. There are still Death Eaters out there that would like nothing better than to take revenge for their Master's death."

Algwyn nodded, "We will have him transported in the morning then."

Ginny looked up from where she had been sitting half asleep by Harry's side, "Did you say that we would be moving in the morning?"

Dumbledore replied, “Yes, Ginny, we are going to take Harry back to Hogwarts until he wakes up.”

Ginny smiled slightly, “I’ll try to get some rest, then. I want to be awake when we go.” Ginny crawled into the bed that had been magically enlarged for two people and curled up beside her beloved fiancé. Dumbledore glanced over at the nightstand to see that day’s copy of The Daily Prophet.

He smiled, “I see that you are saving The Daily Prophet for Harry when he awakes.”

Ginny nodded, “Yes, I’m sure that he will hate the article, but he needs to read it anyway.” She yawned.

Dumbledore reached out and patted her head in a grandfatherly way, “Get some sleep, Ginny. I’m sure Harry will wake up soon.”

Ginny murmured as she drifted off to sleep, “He better.”

Once Dumbledore was sure that she had fallen asleep, he stepped over to read the article in the paper one more time. It read.

Boy Who Lived Defeats He Who Must Not Be Named

In a surprise attack on Hogwarts yesterday, You Know Who attempted to wipe out that final bastion of knowledge in England. He also sought to dispose of his greatest rival, Harry Potter. Young Potter however, managed to yet again save the world by disposing of the Dark Lord. Potter is rumored to have been wounded in the confrontation and is currently being held at St. Mungos Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries. All inquiries into Mr. Potter’s condition have been met with strong rebuffs of no comment from both the Ministry and St. Mungos’ staff. Yesterday was a triumphant day for the Light, but it was not without its cost. Noted dead among the defenders of Hogwarts include ex-Auror Alastor ‘Mad-Eye’ Moody, Lieutenant Auror Raymond Adams, numerous other Aurors, several Order of the Phoenix members including Sturgis Podmore, Dedalus Diggle, and Hestia Jones. There is rumored to have been several casualties among the student body, but reports of this have yet to be confirmed at this time. The confirmed number of dead in the confrontation is known to be thirty-two. Further reports will be posted as we have them.

Dumbledore muttered, “Add three students to the list and you have them all. A great victory, and a great tragedy all in one. I am getting too old for this.” He glanced over to the unconscious Harry and sleeping Ginny and said to himself, “It is time for another generation to take the lead.”

Harry was moved to Hogwarts the next morning. He showed no improvement over the next several days. Then, the night before the farewell feast came. Ginny was lying on the bed with Harry, while Ron, Hermione, Neville, and Luna sat around the bed in the hospital ward. Dumbledore walked into the room with McGonagall. Ginny looked up and smiled wanly, “Hello, Headmaster.”

Dumbledore smiled back at her, “Good evening, Ginny. I take it that there is no change.”

Ginny shook her head as the others looked on somberly. Dumbledore sighed, “Well, the leaving feast is tomorrow evening. I will understand if none of you wish to attend. However, the business of the school must continue. Minerva has your N.E.W.T. results, and Neville, I need to speak with you about taking over for Professor Sprout next year as well. She still wishes to retire, and has recommended you to be her successor.”

Neville smiled, “I would be honored to join the staff here, Professor Dumbledore.”

Albus chuckled lightly, “That is another thing that will be changing. I am retiring. Minerva will be taking over as Headmistress of the school. I would like for you to consider being her Deputy Headmaster.”

Neville shook his head, “I would be honored to accept such a position, but I must respectfully decline. That will be Harry’s job next year when he takes the Defense Against the Dark Arts position.”

Albus beamed, “That is exactly the response that I expected from you. I agree with you as well. Harry will be Headmaster of Hogwarts one day.”

Minerva shivered, “I fear for the student body on that day. A full fledged Marauder as Headmaster of Hogwarts is a scary concept.” She handed Neville, Hermione, and Ron their N.E.W.T. envelopes. Then, she handed Harry’s to Ginny. “Under the circumstances, I think that Harry would like for you to open his scores with the others, Ginny.”

Ginny nodded and the four students opened their score packages. This is what they found.

Neville Franklin Longbottom

N.E.W.T. scores
Defense Against the Dark Arts O
Ancient Runes E
Care of Magical Creatures E
Charms E
Herbology O

Hermione Jane Granger

N.E.W.T. scores
Defense Against the Dark Arts E
Charms O
Transfiguration O
Potions O
Arithmancy E

Ronald Bilius Weasley

N.E.W.T. scores
Defense Against the Dark Arts O
Charms E
Care of Magical Creatures E
Herbology E

Harry James Potter

N.E.W.T. scores
Defense Against the Dark Arts O
Charms O
Transfiguration O
Potions O
Herbology O

Ginny smiled as she showed the others Harry’s scores, and then they began to compare among themselves.

The next evening all of them decided to go to the feast except for Ginny. She still refused to leave Harry’s side. After everyone was seated in the Great Hall, Dumbledore rose from his seat at the center of the Head Table, and said, “We have completed yet another year at Hogwarts. I know that this year has been a trying time for all of you. The battle here a few days ago was the most horrific thing that has ever come to Hogwarts. I would like for everyone to raise their glasses in toast to all of the fallen warriors who chose the right path over the easy one. I want all of you to remember this day. I want you all to remember the cost of turning to evil. I also want you all to remember that the Light will always triumph.”

With a pop, Harry and Ginny appeared directly behind Dumbledore as he finished this sentence. Harry stepped forward and said, “Damn right.”

Everyone in the hall gasped in surprise at Harry’s appearance, as Dumbledore sat down completely flabbergasted. He spluttered, “Harry, you have awakened.”

Harry smiled, “I just had to recharge. It took a lot to destroy Voldemort.”

Dumbledore stood back up, “I would also like everyone to raise their glasses to Harry Potter. For without him none of this would have been possible. All armies need a leader and Harry has been an excellent one. Now, let us eat.”

After the celebration, Harry and his friends went to Dumbledore's office with Albus, Minerva, Lupin, and Tonks. Harry asked, "Who died?"

Dumbledore replied gravely, "There were a lot of deaths, Harry."

Harry nodded, "I know. I want to know who?"

Dumbledore sighed, "Very well. The students that died were Ernie MacMillan, Blaise Zabini, and Anthony Goldstein." Dumbledore continued to list all of the dead.

Once he was through, Ginny said, "There was someone else that died, Harry."

Harry asked, "Who?"

Ginny replied, "Peter Pettigrew."

Harry snorted, "And I'm supposed to care."

Ginny said quietly, "You should. He saved my life."

"What?"

Ginny continued, "He jumped in front of a Cruciatus Curse for me. Then, he told me to tell you that he considered his debt to you paid. Then, he said that he was going to pay his debt to your parents and Sirius. He took out a knife and stabbed himself in the throat."

Harry shook his head, "A coward to the end. At least he did something positive before he died." The group of witches and wizards continued talking well into the night. The next morning, Harry, Neville, Ron, and Hermione departed Hogwarts for the last time as students. Although, Neville and Harry would both be returning the next year as Professors.

30. Fifteen Years Later

The final day of the year dawned to find Harry sitting in the Headmistress' office. He looked across at Minerva and asked, "How does it feel to know you are about to leave Hogwarts for some much deserved rest and relaxation.?"

McGonagall quirked a wry grin at Harry as an aged voice said from behind him, "She feels the same way I did fifteen years ago. She is ready to pass on the reins, but is hesitant to do so for fear that you are not ready for the responsibility."

Harry turned around and smiled, "Hello, Albus. It has been at least a year."

Albus nodded as he sat down, "Yes, it has."

McGonagall chuckled, "You were close in your analysis of my feelings, Albus, but not quite. I have no doubts about Harry taking over as Headmaster. My doubts are about the school's ability to stand him once he is in charge."

Harry laughed, "Come now, Minerva. I have matured a great deal since the pranks of mine and Neville's first few years as Professors. I have children of my own now."

Albus interrupted with the customary twinkle present in his eye, "Your children are another matter entirely. The combination of a Potter's inability to obey rules and the Weasley temper was a dangerous one at best."

Harry snorted, "You have no idea. I can't even control those two all the time, and I can Apparate anywhere in the castle." Albus and Minerva both laughed at Harry. Harry gave them both a dirty look before asking, "Are you staying for the feast, Albus?"

Albus nodded in affirmation, "I had planned on it. Its not everyday that you witness the Boy-Who-Lived ascending to the Headmaster position at Hogwarts."

Harry wrinkled his nose, "Very funny. I can be abused anywhere. I'm leaving. I'll see you both this evening."

Harry walked down the stairs to find Severus Snape walking up the corridor towards him. Snape called out, "I need a word with you, Harry."

Harry sighed, "What did they do this time?"

Snape grimaced, "They have raided the Potions lab and left graffiti on the walls again."

Harry asked, "Are you sure it was them?"

Snape almost laughed before adopting a stern expression, "They left the message, 'Heirs of Gryffindor rule.' I hardly think there can be any doubt."

Harry shook his head, "That's Gregory and Hannah alright. I will speak with them, and they will report to you for detention at your next convenience, Severus."

Severus waved his hand at this, "Just make them clean it off without magic. That should be enough of a lesson."

Harry chuckled, "Very well." Harry headed down the corridor back to the quarters that he shared with Ginny and the children while they were at Hogwarts. Since Ginny had taken over the Charms job after Flitwick had retired, the family had spent most of their time at the castle. As he rounded a corner, a camera flashed in his face. Harry swore violently, "Damn it, Colin. If you don't stop doing that, I'm going to bind you with a Disapparation Jinx and then Portkey you to Siberia."

Colin bubble enthusiastically, "Its for the Daily Prophet article, Harry. They want a huge article on you taking over as Headmaster. I have been assigned to it."

Harry groaned, "I hate publicity. Just don't blind me with that bloody camera, again."

Colin smiled good naturedly as Harry continued down the corridor. He walked into his quarters to find Ginny, Neville, Hermione, Luna, and Ron sitting in the living area. Harry greeted them all and then asked, "So, how are things at the zoo, Ron?"

Ron grinned, "Pretty good. We're working on getting some of Hagrid's thestrals into the zoo."

The group sat around talking until the children came bouncing in. Harry called to both of them sternly, "Gregory James Potter, Hannah Michelle Potter, get over here. I understand that you trashed Professor Snape's lab again."

Gregory replied, "We didn't trash it. We made it better."

Harry's daughter piped up, "Yeah, much better."

Harry continued in a stern voice, "Be that as it may, the two of you will have your so called improvements cleaned up before tonight or you will not be attending the feast."

Both children said forlornly, "Yes, Dad."

Harry said as they started to turn away, "No magic."

The two of them grumbled but handed over their practice wands and slunk away. That evening, Hogwarts saw one of the largest celebrations it had ever had. Minerva gave a speech announcing her resignation and the appointment of Harry Potter as the new Headmaster. Minister of Magic Dawlish put in an appearance and congratulated Harry. He also gave a short speech, and then everyone tucked in to the delicious food. Throughout the ages, Hogwarts had rarely housed such a festive atmosphere. It was a time of peace and the world's savior, Harry Potter leaned back in his chair to enjoy his surroundings. Then, he said softly to himself, "It's good to be home."

END